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ROBESPIERRE'S...

ROBESPIERRE'S RISE AND FALL



MAURICE DUPLAY.

Reproduced from *Autour de Robespierre. Le conventionnel Lebas*,
by M. Stéphane-Pol.

Frontispiece

ROBESPIERRE'S RISE AND FALL

by
G. LENOTRE

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TO
MONSIEUR ANDRÉ BELLESSORT
AS A MARK OF GRATEFUL FRIENDSHIP

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ROBESPIERRE'S RISE AND FALL

I

THE RISE

WITH a shock of long, dishevelled hair, a wide nose, a thin-lipped mouth, and the self-confident expression of a vigilant overseer, so proud of his trade that, instead of donning his best coat and Sunday shirt, he has preferred to face the artist's pencil with his shabby old waistcoat hanging open above the swelling folds of a common, knotted cravat—it is thus that we see Duplay, the carpenter, in a drawing dating from the year II, when he was nearing the age of sixty. While still young he had moved to Paris from his native Gévaudan,¹ and had married, about the year 1765, a respectable girl from Créteil near Charenton, called Marie-Françoise Vaugeois—a little older than himself, it is true, but the descendant of three generations of carpenters.² After thirty years of orderly life and faithful work he had attained to a position of comfort. His marriage had brought him five children, of whom four were girls: the boy, who was christened Maurice, began his education in 1790 at the Collège d'Harcourt,³ where his father had studied before him. Duplay had, moreover, given a home to his brother's two orphaned boys, Jacques and Simon, whom he employed as workmen.

All the inmates of this little establishment were thoroughly well drilled: the carpenter, worthy man, affected the severity of a stage father: his wife—a model to housekeepers—knew the value of time and allowed none to be frittered away; her four daughters,

who had been well brought up by the nuns of the Conception, were trained in the domestic arts : in the records of the family we find them cleaning vegetables, preparing meals, washing and ironing linen. It seems clear that no servant helped them in these occupations ; but a workwoman called Françoise Calandot came from Choisy from time to time, for the day, to "do the mending."¹ It was at Choisy that Madame Duplay's relatives had established themselves long before, attracted by the important alterations that were made in the royal palace under Louis XV. Her father, the carpenter of Crêteil, had died there ; her brother, Jean-Pierre Vaugeois, a carpenter like all his forefathers, had settled there in 1749 ; her sister, Marie-Louise, had there married the contractor of the ferry, whose post was lucrative and highly respectable.

On fine summer Sundays, when the carpenter's bench was deserted, the Duplays were wont to set off on the coach or in the stage-wagon, to spend the day at Choisy. They would dine with Uncle Jean-Pierre, who owned a comfortable house with a garden and back-yard² ; they would pay a visit to Aunt Duchange, who never left her own home, having been paralysed for several years³ ; and they would stroll in the delightful gardens of the palace, laid out in terraces on the bank of the Seine. The two brothers-in-law, Duplay and Vaugeois, were close friends : they had the same uprightness of character, the same successful life, the same satisfaction in duty accomplished. Both of them, though the sons of humble artisans, had raised themselves by sheer hard work, and were now in a position to hope, not without a touch of pride, that their daughters would marry well and their sons be classed as *bourgeois*.

The house occupied by Duplay in the Rue Saint-Honoré belonged to the nuns of the Conception. It faced the Church of the Assumption, very close to the

Riding School of the Tuilleries, in which the National Assembly was installed in October, 1789; a circumstance that turned this corner of Paris into a remarkably animated scene. A few weeks later the Jacobin Fathers, whose monastery stood a little farther down the same street, offered to the deputies the use of a room in the convent, wherein they might meet together of an evening and talk over their affairs; and this added still more to the revolutionary fame of the neighbourhood. Clubs were the ruling fashion of the moment; there was a positive mania for this innovation; but the reputation of the club that held its meetings at the Jacobin Monastery soon eclipsed all others. Before it was a year old its members numbered more than a thousand. To be admitted to it nothing was necessary but an introduction by five members and the payment of an annual subscription of twenty-four *livres*.¹ Duplay, the carpenter, applied for admission: not that he had ever concerned himself with politics nor aspired to enlighten the people's representatives with his wisdom; but in this scene that lay only a few yards from his own home he found, not only a novel form of stimulation, but also an opportunity of seeing and hearing the orators whose praises were being sung by every newspaper. There he could rub shoulders, on equal terms, with Bailly, Barnave, the Lameths, Pétion, Mirabeau, Duport, Brissot, and Robespierre, to say nothing of the Duc de Chartres and the Viscomte de Noailles. For this gratifying companionship he paid, it is true, in the profound boredom of listening to endless harangues on the most abstruse questions of parliamentary tactics.

On the evening of Sunday the 17th July, 1791, Paris was in a state of ferment. It was rumoured far and wide that a shocking affray had taken place in the Champ de Mars, between the National Guard

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and the mob. Some of the combatants were killed and others wounded ; and the Court was suspected of being responsible for this recourse to violence. Indeed, when martial law was proclaimed, it was feared that the most famous patriots might be arrested in the course of the night. The Jacobins held a fiery meeting ; a menacing crowd filled the Rue Saint-Honoré ; the members of the club were greeted, when they emerged at about eleven o'clock that night,¹ with cheers, hisses, and yells. La Fayette's troops, returning from the Champ de Mars in a state of great excitement, poured abuse, as they passed, upon the lair of the " brothers and friends." Duplay caught sight of Maximilien Robespierre, edging his way through the crowd to escape from the threatening demonstration : he had listened to him, a few moments earlier, " pouring into the bosom of the Society the grief felt by the patriots for the terrible events of the day."² Duplay went up to him and offered him a refuge in his own house hard by. Robespierre did not know Duplay ; but none the less, in his fear of being unable to reach, without some misadventure, his distant lodging in the Rue de Saintonge, in the Marais, he accepted the offer of this generous stranger, and a few minutes later found himself out of danger.

It was a courageous action on the part of Duplay to introduce into his own home so compromising a guest. It may be that, like the good fellow he was, he spontaneously obeyed the impulse to be kind ; it may be that he was not altogether unmoved by the honour of sheltering one of the champions of liberty ; but he certainly did not foresee the disasters that would result from his imprudence, and the next day, when Robespierre was making ready to take his departure, his hosts of the previous night insisted on keeping him. The house was large ; they could give him a modest little room for the moment, until one of the

apartments that they sub-let should be empty ; it would be very convenient for him there, quite close to the Jacobins and the Assembly ; if he would consent to share the meals of the family his life would be greatly simplified. The offer was tempting, and Robespierre accepted it provisionally¹ ; his trunk was sent for, and he settled down in a little room on the first floor, looking out eastwards upon the courtyard, above the outhouse in which the workmen carried on their business.

It is easy to imagine the flutter created by this addition to the household of the Duplays, wherein nothing abnormal had ever happened before : the discreet curiosity of the girls with regard to this young, famous, and somewhat mysterious stranger ; the satisfaction of the carpenter, who could now cut a fine figure among the Jacobins ; the ready zeal of Mamma Duplay, silently enjoying the amazement of the neighbours. There was not one of them but would have been flatly incredulous if a prophet had foretold to them that their simple, unexacting lodger, who was so accommodating in his ways and had no possessions but a few clothes and some papers and books, would be the cause of disaster to the happy family who welcomed him thus unsuspectingly. Before three years were past this day's doings would bring ruin upon the father, as well as the loss of his wife ; widowhood to one of the daughters, and to another lifelong desolation ; to their mother, death ; and to all their kindred and friends persecution, imprisonment, and poverty.

To the lodger himself in that peaceful household, of which every member was striving to please him, was revealed a condition of well-being that he had never known before. Never before had he enjoyed the calm delights of family life ; as far back as his soured memories could take him he recalled nothing but bitterness and humiliation. His very birth, as

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he well knew, had not been desired. His father, François de Robespierre,¹ an advocate in the Council of Artois, having seduced the daughter of a small brewer in the Faubourg Ronville at Arras, married her—much to the annoyance of his family—to avoid a scandal that was obviously threatening. Maximilien saw the light not more than four months after this marriage,² of which four other children were born. The last, who did not live, cost the mother her life.³

Madame de Robespierre's premature death gave rise to a drama that is shrouded in mystery: her husband refused to sign the death-certificate in the register of Saint-Aubert's parish; he was not present at the funeral service nor at the burial in the parish church.⁴ Whether his bereavement had affected his reason, or the influence of his wife had hitherto repressed a natural tendency to eccentricity which was now left without restraint, he ceased to practise at the bar, vegetated in idleness for several months, and then, leaving Arras, abandoned his four children to destitution, and established himself at Sauchy-Cauchy, near Marquion, where he acted as bailiff to the lord of the manor. At the end of six months he returned to Arras, and lived there for some time in idleness. Having borrowed 700 *livres* from his sisters Eulalie and Henriette, very pious and devout spinsters whose means were extremely small, he disappeared again for two years to some mysterious retreat which no inquiries have succeeded in revealing. We find him again in October, 1768, begging for money from his old mother—who had been living in retirement since her widowhood at the Convent of the Dames de la Paix—and very probably obtaining it, for it was at this time that he renounced, “both for himself and for his posterity,” all rights to any future inheritance.⁵ Having thus compromised the future of his children, François de Robespierre expatriated himself, and

settled down at Mannheim, in the Rhenish Palatinate.¹

At the time of this singular father's first escapades, the fate of the four deserted little ones was made secure. Their aunts, Eulalie and Henriette, undertook the care of the two little girls: Charlotte, who in 1764 was four years old, and Françoise, who was eighteen months younger. Their Grandpapa Carrault, the brewer of the Faubourg Ronville, took home the two boys: Augustin-Bon—known as *Bonbon*—a baby aged a year and a half, and Maximilien, who was just six. This placid and industrious child, with a cushion on his knees and bobbins in his fingers, was already able to make lace very skilfully.²

As soon as he could read and write he attended, as a day-boy, the classes of a college where secular priests, under the direction of the Bishop, taught the children of the town gratuitously. His schoolfellows declared that his character was “detestable,” and they found “his unlimited desire to dominate” hard to bear³; but it was this precocious vanity that inspired him with an immense ardour in his work and a sort of obstinate determination to gain the first place. It is certain that the compassion his misfortunes inspired gave him pain; and perhaps Grandmamma Carrault—meaning well, but expressing herself crossly—exhorted him, without beating about the bush, to repay her self-sacrifice by being zealous in his studies. If the child, over-sensitive as he was, ever happened to be present during one of those domestic bickerings or bargainings that so frequently occur in little households, where any additional expense is a burden to the modest finances, his precocious surliness and morose tendency to isolate himself would be explained at once. He had no mother to guess his trouble and drive it all away with a caress.

A very detailed inventory enables us to picture the scene in which Robespierre's first years were passed.

The house of the Carraults in the Faubourg Ronville had nothing decorative about it. The lower room, through which the house was entered, contained a marble table, a piece of oil-cloth, and a bed with curtains of printed calico ; next to it was a larger room, containing two poster-beds with green serge curtains, an arm-chair, and one other chair. Upstairs there was a little room—Maximilien's, perhaps—in which was a truckle-bed made of sacking and “grains” ; there were grains in the anteroom also ; and near the kitchen were two wardrobes of oak, which held all the crockery, linen, and clothes of the whole family : breeches of nankeen or cloth, and hats, and wigs. And everywhere there were furnaces and other implements for brewing.¹ Here every evening for five years, amid all the hurry and movement of workmen and clients, the orphan, on his return from school, wrote his exercises and learnt his lessons. His amusements were not exhilarating. His sister Charlotte writes that “he rarely shared in the games and pleasures of his fellow-students” ; he liked being alone, “so as to meditate at his ease,” and spent whole hours in reflection.² As for the house “full of bird-cages” of which we have heard,³ it is but a legend : there was not a single bird-cage in Père Carrault's house. It is highly probable that Maximilien, since he had neither playthings nor playfellows, took a simple pleasure in taming the pigeons and sparrows which were attracted in great numbers by the stores of grain in the brewer's house.

Despite his goodwill, the latter had neither the intention nor the means of making “a gentleman” of his grandson ; and indeed the legal profession, which had proved so unprofitable to the child's father and grandfather,⁴ seemed to him far from desirable. It is certain that Carrault intended, as soon as Maximilien should be strong enough to begin his appren-

ticeship, to employ him in his own industry, either as a maltman or a book-keeper; but the professors at the college groaned at the idea of so studious a pupil cutting short his education before winning any diploma. His repeated successes excited interest; charitably-disposed persons concerned themselves in the matter; his two aunts, notwithstanding their poverty, held an honoured position in the society of Arras, owing to their high character and their piety, and they pleaded their nephew's cause to a canon of the cathedral, M. Aymé.¹ The Bishop himself took up the matter, and obtained for little Robespierre one of the four foundation-scholarships connected with the University of Paris that had been, from time immemorial, at the disposal of the Regular Abbot of Saint-Vaast, one of the most famous and powerful monasteries in Artois. In the autumn of 1769 Maximilien left Arras, and became a member of the fifth form in the College of Louis-le-Grand.

It is not generally known that, after 1719, the secondary education that is now only accorded to children favoured by fortune, was given *gratuitously* by the University. The payment made to the schools was for "board," the price of which varied according to the habits and requirements of each individual. There were young *seigneurs* who brought several servants to college with them and lived there almost sumptuously; but the foundation-scholars had all their expenses paid; they received lodging, board, and education without spending a shilling; their parents or guardians were responsible for nothing but the upkeep of their linen and other garments.

Difficult as it is to find the truth in the history of a schoolboy whom some authorities represent as a miracle of gentleness and submission, while others depict him as a young tiger, already ferocious, dreaming of blood and sharpening his fangs for the rending of

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his benefactors, it is undeniable that, throughout the seven years during which he attended the classes of the great Parisian college, Robespierre's attention to his work did not relax for a single day. His successes, indeed, were sufficient evidence of his industry. It seems no less certain that the perversities of his character did not gain him the friendship of his school-fellows nor the confidence of his teachers ; for not everything is untrue in the recollections of one of the latter,¹ who, after his emigration, published under a pseudonym a "Life of Robespierre" that shows as much prejudice as a counsel's address. He describes the hard-working boy as being "infatuated with his own excellence," and holding aloof from his school-fellows. "Often, during the private recreations that were carried on in the class-rooms, he would be left alone, and he had the strength of mind to remain thus for hours at a time," affecting "to be sufficient to himself," and preferring "melancholy reveries and solitary walks²" to any riotous amusement. "If, in class, he was adjudged the highest place, he would go and sit there without haste or eagerness, as though it were the only place suitable for his talents." . . . "He spoke little ; doing so only when others seemed to be listening to him, and then always with an air of finality." Perhaps this arrogance was a cloak for the shame he felt on account of his poverty. Who knows that the poor deserted boy did not suffer because he was not "like the others," and blush because he wore tattered clothes, and shoes that were down at heel ? No one was thinking of them but himself, but he was on the alert for slights.

Though the College contained a very large number of foundation-scholars—six hundred, it is said—Robespierre was not only one of the most industrious, but also one of the neediest. His grandparents, the Carraults, thought they had "done their share" ;

the two good aunts at Arras were too poor to send him any money—they were even obliged to give up the care of their nieces Charlotte and Françoise, whose support had become too heavy a burden. They secured for the two little girls—once more through the intervention of the clergy—nominations to a religious house at Tournay, where poor girls were “taught reading and writing, netting and sewing, until they were in a position to gain their livelihood.”¹ The boy, meanwhile, was almost reduced to penury, notwithstanding the charity of the Bishop and the Abbé Aymé, his benefactors at Arras, and of M. Delaroche, a canon of the chapter of Notre Dame de Paris, who acted as Robespierre’s guardian during his early days at Louis-le-Grand. In his desire not to cut too poor a figure among schoolfellows who were richer than himself, Maximilien “indulged in the expense of a hairdresser,” and it was not unusual “to see him with an elegantly curled head, while his shoes and garments were in holes.”² A letter has been quoted in which, writing to the vice-principal of the college, he confesses his destitute condition in rather haughty terms: “He has no coat, and lacks several things without which he cannot present himself to the Bishop of Arras, now staying in Paris.”³

Either because he was the poorest, or as a recognition of his success, he was chosen out by those in authority to make a complimentary speech to Louis XVI one day, when the latter paid a visit to Louis-le-Grand. The event was made an opportunity for giving a coat to the young student, “in order that he might present a decent appearance”; and he delivered his harangue, to which the King, it is said, listened graciously. These two were destined to meet again one day. . . .

During the vacations, which took Robespierre back to Arras for two months every summer, he no doubt

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found his little room in Carrault's brewery ready to receive him¹; but it was with the generous Canon Aymé that he ate his meals. It is a bewildering and, indeed, inexplicable fact that in July, 1771, his father, of whom nothing had been seen for nearly three years, returned to live in Arras, where he remained for several months, resuming his place at the bar and pleading in seventeen lawsuits.² It seems incredible that he should not have seen his children. Later on, Charlotte Robespierre dilated in moving terms on the great delight that the vacations were to her, and was carefully silent with regard to her sojourn in the convent where she spent eleven years³; but she never breathed a word of this reappearance of her father, whom she declared "she had never seen again after her mother's death." What secret lies hidden behind this reticence, over circumstances of the first importance to a girl who was, according to her own account, most affectionate and sensitive? What was the motive-power, what were the marching-orders that this intermittent father obeyed? May he not have been one of those "unknown travellers" of whom Louis Blanc speaks, "who were found dwelling in towns on the eve of the Revolution," and whose "presence and aims and circumstances were so many problems"? As long as this enigma remains unsolved we cannot flatter ourselves that we have fathomed Maximilien Robespierre's astonishing story.

The scholarship he held gave him the right of staying at Louis-le-Grand till he had taken a degree in medicine, theology, or jurisprudence: he therefore continued to live in the college, with free board and lodging, during the four years of his legal studies. Although at liberty to come and go as he pleased in the beguiling town of Paris, which was quite new to him and so often had an unsettling effect upon others, he went on his way with an unmoved heart, letting

youth go by while his fixed idea of predominance obsessed him. Any leisure that was left to him by the Faculty he occupied in studying legal procedure under the attorney Aucante, in the Rue Sainte-Croix de la Bretonnerie.¹

On the 15th May, 1781, he was successful in taking his degree, and on the following 2nd August was called to the bar of the Parlement of Paris. His difficulty was to find means of living while waiting for lucrative cases to come his way. Outside the walls of the college that had been his universe for twelve years the unhappy youth had neither shelter nor bread. The authorities at Louis-le-Grand came to his help for the last time : his brother *Bonbon*, who was approaching the age of eighteen, inherited his scholarship and came to the college in his place ; and, since it was authorised by the regulations of the institution that any excess of revenue should be annually distributed in helping the foundation-scholars, Maximilien received, by way of a farewell gift, six hundred *livres* and a most complimentary certificate. The meagreness of this provision made it impossible for him to live in Paris, so he set out for Arras with the intention of settling there.

In any case his presence there was required, on account of various events that had taken place in his family. His aunts, both of whom were nearly forty, had married. Eulalie's husband was a retired notary called Deshorties, a widower with several children ; Henriette had married an old doctor, François Du Rut, in the hope that the marriage would be of some benefit to her nephews and nieces, whose future filled her with dismay. She had made Du Rut undertake to give a home to Maximilien, when that young man should have finished his studies.² The Carraults, both the grandmother and grandfather, were dead, and their son had inherited the brewery. As for Maximilien's sisters, Charlotte and Françoise, they had been

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sheltered by their aunts on their return from Tournay. Françoise had died in the spring of 1780.

As soon as Maximilien arrived the affairs connected with the Carrault inheritance were taken in hand. Du Rut was obstinate : he insisted on the return of the sums formerly borrowed from his wife by François de Robespierre. When everything was settled, the share of the inheritance that fell to Maximilien was *76 livres 12 sols*—hardly enough to buy the gown and wig that were to be his means of livelihood.¹

This period of Robespierre's life has been depicted by his apologists as a time of constant successes and of growing reputation. This is, to a certain extent, to embroider the facts. The truth of the matter is that his fellow-townsmen, being possessed of generous hearts and sympathetic souls, took an interest in him with one accord, on account of his misfortunes, his great poverty, and his praiseworthy determination to conquer his ill-fortune. They vied with one another to help him ; he was at once admitted to practise in the court of the Council of Artois ; M. de Madre, one of the judges of that court, took him as his secretary, and the Bishop of Arras made him a judge of the episcopal tribunal, the jurisdiction of which extended over part of the town and about twenty of the surrounding parishes.² Being thus secured against dying of hunger Robespierre set up house with his sister Charlotte in the Rue du Saumon, refusing the hospitality offered him by his uncle and aunt Du Rut, with whom his relations were already strained. But clients were few and far between, law-suits were unimportant, and fees were miserably small. The struggle quickly came to an end, and, having exhausted his own and his sister's slender resources, he was obliged at the end of a year to haul down his flag and ask for shelter from the Du Ruts, who received him in their house in the Rue des Teinturiers.³

His chance came to him through the agency of his colleague Buissart, a barrister who cared less for oratorical successes than for scientific research. Buissart was a regular contributor to the *Journal de physique*, and corresponded with several men of science—or men who at least called themselves so. Among them was a M. de Vissery of Saint-Omer, an assiduous inventor who professed to have discovered a method by which “a diver could be enabled to breathe fresh and fortifying air when deep in the water,” which made it possible to “walk safely in the most profound seas.” Vissery, being filled with enthusiasm by Franklin’s discovery, had erected a lightning-conductor on his house—a strange and terrifying machine, composed of a “fulminating globe armed with darts in various directions,” whence there issued a long sword menacing the heavens. The neighbours, seized with terror, persuaded the authorities to order the destruction of this apparatus ; Vissery was obliged to obey, but appealed to the Council of Artois ; Buissart took the cause in hand, and swore to make it triumph. He applied to every physicist and every jurist of note ; to Père Cotte, to Condorcet, to Guyton de Morveau, to the Abbé Bertholon, to Gerbier, to Élie de Beaumont, to Target ; he stirred up the Académie des Sciences, and the Dijon Academy, and the Academy of Montpellier ; he published a memorial crammed with scientific and judicial evidence, so successfully that all the scientific bodies were kept interested for more than a year in the Affair of the Lightning-Conductor of Saint-Omer. Then Buissart, to whom all the merit was due, left the glory to be reaped by Robespierre, to whom he entrusted the task of upholding this famous cause before the bench.

The case was opened in May, 1783. Robespierre, making the most of the opportunity, extended his arguments over three sittings, and achieved a trium-

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phant success ; his speech was printed ; the Parisian newspapers called attention to it ; and the exulting M. Vissery set up once more upon his roof his globe, his darts, and his sword-blade.¹ After so much evidence and oratory his neighbours could no longer throw doubt on the beneficent uses of lightning-conductors in general, but they maintained their distrust of the anomalous machine created by their fellow-citizen. What they demanded was an inquiry and a report by experts ; not drawn up at a distance by scientists in Paris, Dijon, Montpellier, or elsewhere, but carried out by local specialists who could examine the apparatus in question. Here they obtained satisfaction ; the experts, among whom were two engineer-officers, declared "unanimously" that M. de Vissery's lightning-conductor "was erected contrary to the laws of science, and that it could not stand in its present condition." It was condemned and demolished² ; and, as Vissery had died in the course of the dispute, there was no one to protest. Buissart did not spread abroad this distressing end to the story, Robespierre preferred to ignore it, and his panegyrists have followed his example.

There was a good deal of talk about it, none the less. The public at large made jokes on the subject, and this ridicule did no good to "the lightning-conductor's counsel," who, in supporting a bad cause that had really failed, had won a reputation that was not limited to his own province. The pitiful epilogue alienated the judges, who were annoyed with themselves for being deluded. Possibly it is to this mishap that we must attribute the lack of confidence in Robespierre shown by litigants in Artois. Little value was set upon his prolix and quibbling eloquence ; on this point we have the opinion of a young officer in the Engineers called Carnot, at that time quartered at Calais, who entrusted to him the task of securing a

little legacy that was claimed by an old maid-servant. Carnot came to Arras to hear the case ; it was the first time he had seen Robespierre. The latter spoke "with such lack of skill" that Carnot-Feulins, who had accompanied his brother, "became so excited that he forgot he was present as a mere spectator, and briskly interrupted the lawyer."¹

It is a fact that Maximilien's practice, instead of increasing, grew less important year by year. To judge by the number of his briefs, he held the seventh place at the bar in 1782 ; in 1788 his place was the eleventh. The most famous barrister of Arras, M. Liborel, had retired ; but only Robespierre's rivals profited by his absence. In the legal records of 1788 he appears, with ten briefs, at the bottom of the list, which is headed by M. Dauchez with a hundred and seventy-eight cases²—figures that considerably weaken the following claim of an intrepid admirer of Robespierre, who wrote of his hero : "Hardly had he returned to his native province before he gained, at one bound, the first place among the barristers of the Council of Artois."³ He was, however, industrious, well-informed, austere in his life, and scrupulously upright ; but his stubbornness and arrogance alienated much sympathy ; he was not skilful in concealing his sense of his own superiority, and raised smiles by his complacent and evergreen memories of his academic successes. He imputed every mortification of his self-importance to the malevolence of his colleagues, for his childish sensitiveness had become more acute at school, and was now wont to show itself in suspicion and sullenness at the smallest suggestion of critical raillery. When his friend Buissart introduced him to the Royal Academy of Literature at Arras he was favourably received ; in 1786 his colleagues even did him the honour of electing him chairman, and we find him, at the public meeting that followed his election, reading a paper of

his own composition “on the section of the legislation that concerns the fate of bastards.” He spoke for an hour and three-quarters ; there was hardly any time left for the speech of a new academician who was to pay his respects that day on his reception. The Academy, fearing that so dangerous a case of verbosity might become contagious, thought it a prudent act of self-defence to add a clause to its regulations, limiting the length of speeches to half-an-hour. Robespierre detected criticism, and resigned the position of chairman in a fit of sulks. He excused himself curtly on the score “of his work and his health,” and in the course of the next two years only appeared at the weekly meetings eight times ; whence we may conclude “that only the highest place suited him.”¹

He was more faithful to the Society of the Rosati. But this society only met once a year, in June, beneath a flower-covered arbour at the gates of the town, with the object of dining merrily, drinking good wine, and singing unpretentious songs. In the company of light-hearted epicureans it is difficult to imagine the rôle played by Robespierre, whose temperament was melancholy, who sang out of tune,² who drank nothing but water—less, perhaps, from taste than from economy³—and yet struggled to adapt himself to the mood of his amiable colleagues. His jests, it must be owned, were far from spontaneous ; and this is also true of the two or three letters known to be addressed by him to young women of Arras. Touches of bitterness and irony are mingled with their laboured gallantry ; their sportiveness is “extremely academic.”

He had friends : his fellow-barrister Buissart, Foacier de Ruzé the Solicitor-General, and Dubois de Fosseux, who was afterwards Mayor of Arras. These three were all in a position to help him, but his constantly increasing acrimony isolated him more and more. Was it natural ill-humour, or was it atavism ?

His grandfather, who had indulged in the luxury of a coat of arms, had assumed the device, possibly symbolic, of "two rugged staves"¹; and these *canting* arms, emblematic of a rugged character, might have been adopted by Maximilien. Envy, and an accumulation of bitterness, filled him with hatred of the monarchical system, though he owed to it everything he had; yet he never failed in his professional speeches to refer enthusiastically to "the young and wise monarch who occupies the throne"; or "the saintly passion for the happiness of the people which moulds the noble character" of this beloved king—this king "whom Heaven has bestowed upon us in its goodness." But his clumsy spite sometimes exposed him to humiliation. Having one day, in a printed memorandum, attacked the character of the monks of Anchin for the purposes of his case, he was obliged, with rage in his heart, to make a public apology, and "his fury broke out openly in court."²

A little later, in 1788, the barristers having met in conference and having refused to admit him to their meeting, Robespierre—blinded by rage—issued an anonymous "Letter"³ that was "a veritable declaration of war," addressed to his colleagues at the bar and to their confederates the solicitors. This document has for its motto: "It is very difficult, however philosophical one may be, to suffer long without allowing a word of complaint to escape one"; after which the foolish young man pours out floods of spite against "the seniors who swallow up all the cases," and close the door of the courts to all those juniors "who do not put themselves out to please them, or cannot succeed in doing so." He is depicting himself as their victim when he adds: "However great the talent wherewith nature may have endowed them, however strong the taste they may have for work, these juniors must rest assured that they will

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always vegetate. . . . It is a sad alternative, certainly, for well-educated young men, either to be condemned to do nothing . . . or to owe their work to nothing but humiliating overtures. Is it not a hard thing, now, to go and beg for a brief in the office of a solicitor whose bland expression and tone of voice seem to be saying : I am patronising you ? . . .”

This touch of pride in revolt was tantamount to a signature, and, indeed, no one had any doubts as to the quarter whence this diatribe came. Maître Liborel, the person best qualified to answer it—and the person who had, not long before, introduced Robespierre into the Council of Artois—replied in plain terms¹ : “We do not receive into our company slanderers and malicious men who give vent to nothing but gall. . . . You are wretched, thrice wretched, in that you do not feel the dignity of the profession that you suppose yourself to represent ! Sordid interest and low greed rule your heart to its depths, and unrestrained jealousy prompts you to try to bring down to your own level those enlightened and disinterested men, learned in the law, who have won the confidence of the public by their talents and their wisdom alone. . . . You have no cause of complaint ; if what you say is true, you possess more than is necessary for success, if to win it nothing be needed but baseness . . .” And as Robespierre, in his indignation at the excessive expenses with which poor litigants were burdened, had quoted this line from Racine :

“ . . . deux bottes de foin, cinq à six mille livres ! ”
Liborel answered sharply : “ Do not let that alarm you : you can buy it more cheaply than that ; the great consumption of it that seems to be suitable in your case will secure you a reduction in the price. . . .”

After such a slap in the face as this, Robespierre’s position at the bar was untenable, and he had no choice but to leave Arras, or, if he determined to stay there,

"to vegetate all his life in a condition not far removed from want." The future appeared tragic. He had lately, in 1787, taken an apartment in a house in the Rue des Rapporteurs, quite close to the Place de la Comédie—the building that is still shown to visitors under the name of "Robespierre's house," though he only lived in it, at longest, for two years.¹ For a magnificent opportunity was about to be offered him of emerging with lustre from his hopelessly ignominous position, and of escaping from the thankless town where he had met with nothing, since the day of his birth, but disaster, sadness, vexations, and humiliations.

When, at the end of January, 1789, it was learnt that Louis XVI was convoking an Assembly of all the provincial States in the kingdom, with the view of discovering the wishes and grievances of the people, the inhabitants of Arras would have laughed heartily if it had been foretold that the cross-grained lawyer whose squabbles with his colleagues were a by-word, would be a member of that august gathering. Robespierre was already bestirring himself; and, braving ridicule, he published a manifesto *To the People of Artois*, which was quickly followed by a *Notice to Dwellers in Rural Districts*, and a third firebrand entitled *The Enemies of our Country Unmasked*. He bustled about, and agitated, and was everywhere at once, declaiming against "the oppression beneath which the town of Arras groans, under the rule of its magistrates"; unveiling a horrible plot "devised by the ambitious municipal officers to perpetuate the oppressive system on which their power, their fortunes, and their hopes are founded"; caressing the people, stirring up the poor, employing every method—satire, invective, slander, insinuation, threats, promises, boasts—posing as a martyr to liberty, the one and only defender of the oppressed and humble; denouncing his patron Dubois de Fosseux² as an enemy

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of their cause ; drawing up with his own hand the Writ of Grievances of the Guild of Cobblers ; attacking the governor and the States of Artois ; taking it upon himself to dictate to the voters ; urging upon the simple and entirely credulous electors of the Third Estate " to avoid the gross snares that were set in their way, and to elect men who were *incorrputible*, meaning by this epithet to suggest himself as a candidate. It was he, then, who first applied this word to himself.

The people of Arras were stupefied by the sudden frenzy that shook this little man of low stature and figure so slender in spite of his wide shoulders, this fair-haired, blue-eyed, vague-looking person, " whose manner was cold, and almost repellent,"¹ and who, though they had certainly known him to be sly, had always appeared respectful and reserved. To see him suddenly striking out like a madman at all the institutions and officials of the province, and inciting the innocent country-folk to revolt, roused amazement in many breasts and anxiety in some ; but no one protested. The good people of those days had long been indifferent and apathetic, preferring silence to tumult and resignation to fighting. They were discreet, moreover, to such a point that no one knows how Robespierre came to be elected. One authority² observes " that he intrigued " ; another,³ " that he plotted strenuously " ; and a third⁴ writes : " For the honour of my country I must draw an impenetrable veil over all that passed at the meeting at which I acted as a teller ; it was only with difficulty, and in the midst of brawls and insults and the most affronting remarks . . . that deputies were elected." Only one humorist made himself the mouthpiece of the universal amazement, in a short lampoon comparing the deputies elected by Artois, on their departure for Versailles, to horses ready for the ring. Having described the four *percherons*,⁵ " heavy, black, sturdy, typical



draught-horses" of stable Number One—the Clergy ; and the four racers, "lively, light, sure-footed, and superbly groomed," of stable Number Two—the Nobility ; he depicts the eight horses of stable Number Three, the Tiers Étât, as "country-bred animals, sagacious, steady and cautious, perfect for the uses of husbandry, and more suitable for the cart than the saddle." Finally he comes to Robespierre. "*Fury*, a strong, fiery little nag with flowing mane and tail, knowing nothing of bridle or bit and as vicious as a mule, is perpetually kicking, and never dares to bite except at the back, for fear of the whip. His admission caused surprise, but it is said he is intended to act a comic part after the brilliant exhibitions expected from performers like Mirabeau . . . of whose paces he has been drilled to give a grotesque imitation . . ."¹

Those who were preparing to laugh were under a cruel delusion.

Into the effervescent and crowded town of Versailles streams of deputies flowed from every corner of the kingdom : rich prelates and great *seigneurs* accompanied by their carriages and liveried servants,² and poor clergy from the country, without money or baggage, dumbfounded by their surroundings ; country squires, men of business, men of the law, peasants wandering at random among the solemn avenues, in search of an inn or a lodging-house.³ By order of the government a list of twelve hundred vacant lodgings had been printed ; but many of the people of Versailles preferred to stop the travellers as they went along the road, to wring a good bargain the more easily from their embarrassment.⁴ Many poor deputies among the clergy and the *tiers*, feeling lost in the great unknown town, joined groups of their colleagues from the same province, with a view to living economically. It was

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easy to find furnished rooms costing from forty to forty-five francs a month, with an additional *écu* a day for food.¹ The arrangement was made to cover three months, the longest time that the Assembly of the States was expected to continue.

Robespierre, who was elected on the 26th April, set out from Arras, at the earliest, on the evening of Friday, the 1st May; for on that day the sixteen deputies elected by Artois had appeared with due solemnity before the three Orders, assembled in the great hall of the Hôpital Général, to take the oath to fulfil their commission faithfully and in every detail.² As he had no money, a friend of his sister Charlotte, Madame Marchand, who printed the *Artois Advertiser*, lent the deputy ten louis, and a trunk wherein to pack his clothes. Among them were "three pair of black breeches, very much worn, a black velvet coat that had been dyed, six shirts in good condition, two pair of silk stockings, of which one pair was nearly new, a little black cloak, a barrister's gown, a hat to be carried under the arm," and a quantity of copies of his electioneering addresses.³ It is very probable that he did not reach Versailles on the 2nd May in time to join the other deputies of the *tiers-état* in filing past the King, who had received the representatives of the *noblesse* at eleven o'clock on the same day, and those of the clergy at one. The meeting of "these gentlemen of the Tiers" was timed for four o'clock in the Salon d'Hercule, which they were to approach by way of the winding staircase of the chapel, on the right side. There they met to the number of five hundred and sixty.⁴ Three mortal hours were spent in discussions with the Masters of the Ceremonies and the Ushers, but at last the procession moved off among the splendours of the salons and the gallery. Barriers had been arranged so as to form a narrow passage along which the people's representatives

walked, with only moderate docility, one behind the other; while, protected by these balustrades, the fine ladies and courtiers looked at "these worthy fellows" passing by.¹ Each one on entering the King's chamber made a profound bow to Louis XVI, who, as he stood between his two brothers amid a crowd of gentlemen of quality and fashion, was chatting and laughing without paying the least attention in the world to the procession of the Nation's elect. On one man only did the King's eyes rest, on account of his singular costume, his black jacket and brown waistcoat: he was a labourer called Père Gérard, elected by the *sénéchaussée* of Rennes. The King said to him: "Good day, my good man."² These trifling facts, being passed from mouth to mouth, spread disaffection.

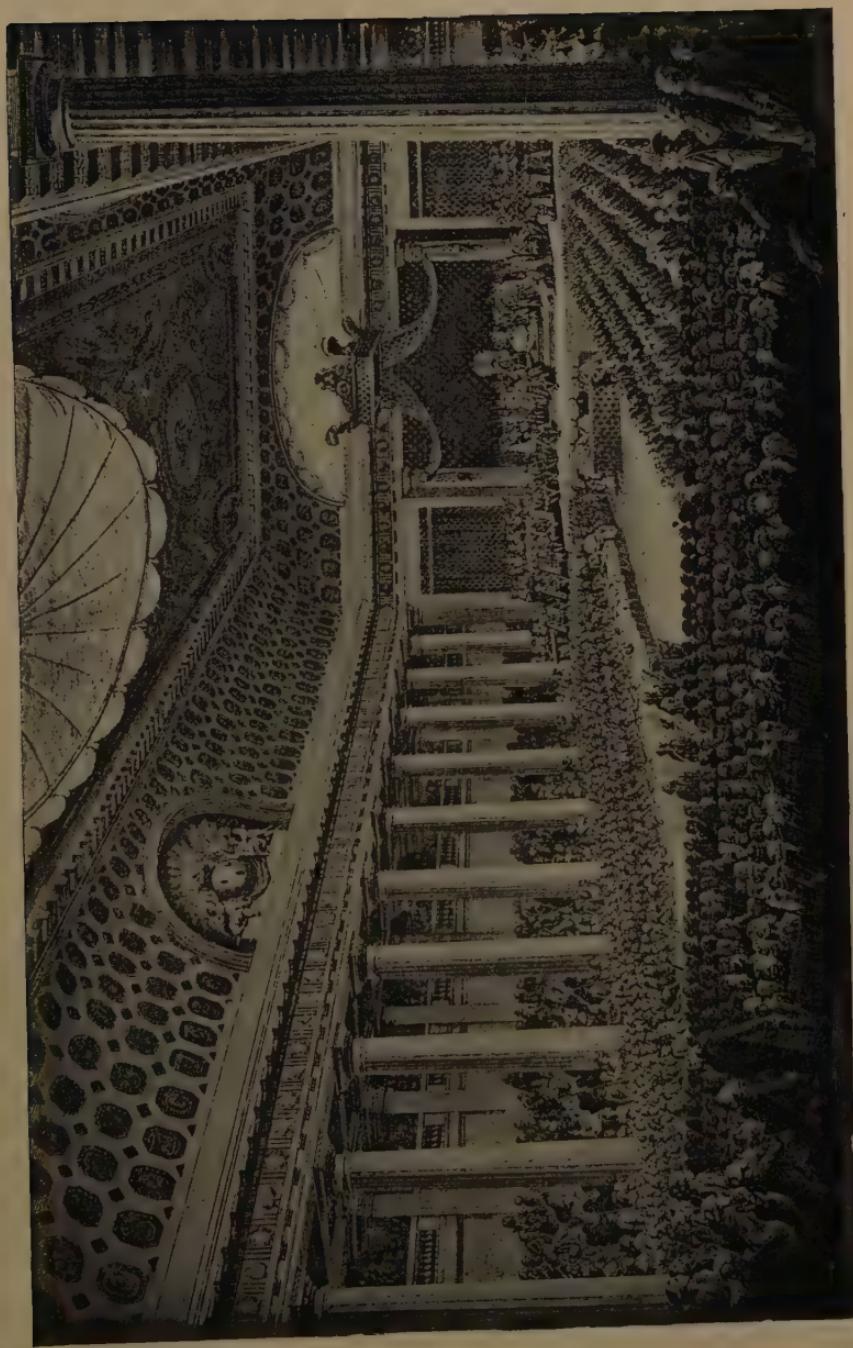
Robespierre was certainly at Versailles for the procession of the 5th May, a military and religious ceremony which exposed the too-tender susceptibilities of the people's deputies to fresh shocks. He had made the journey with three of his colleagues from Artois, the humblest of them all: Payen, a farmer of Boiry-Becquerelle, Fleury, a farmer of Coupelle-Vieille, and Petit, a labourer from Magnicourt-sur-Canche. They all four found rooms in an inn that stood at the end of the town, No. 16³ in the Rue de l'Étang, displaying the sign of the Fox.⁴ The three countrymen in their unaccustomed surroundings never strayed a foot away from Maximilien's elbow.⁵ These were his first *Seids*.⁶

For him, what a compensation for past humiliations was this fifth of May! By eight o'clock in the morning⁷ he and his three inseparable companions were in the out-building that encroached on the Rue des Chantiers and served as a vestibule to the Hall of the States-General. The three Orders were mingled there indiscriminately: he was elbowing the greatest

nobles and the most famous prelates in France.¹ The Grand Master of the Ceremonies, M. le Marquis de Dreux-Brézé, was in charge of the arrangements : a handsome young man,² tall and well made, " his cloak shining with gold and precious stones, his fingers covered with diamonds, and his head adorned with brilliantly white plumes : an ebony staff ornamented with an ivory handle, which he wielded gracefully, was the emblem of his distinguished office."³ From a balcony above, a herald-at-arms proclaimed the summons, and the ushers, with an air of great deference, hastily examined the warrant of each deputy, and then introduced him into the assembly-hall.⁴ It was a dazzling scene.⁵ Two majestic colonnades formed the sides of the immense hall, and at the end of them rose—like the sanctuary at the end of a nave—the semi-circular daïs on which the King of France was about to take his place, under a high canopy with rich draperies of violet velvet embroidered with golden fleurs-de-lys, the heavy silken folds of which swept backwards in stately curves. Beside the throne prepared for Louis XVI, but a little lower, was another for the Queen, and on—either hand were arm-chairs, stools, and benches for the royal family and other dignitaries. The most beautiful carpets from the Savonnerie covered the steps of the royal platform and the whole floor of the hall,⁶ which was gradually filling. At the end opposite to the throne the representatives of the Tiers-État were crowded, on account of their number, " on benches that had no backs and were very close together."⁷ On their right, along the colonnade, were the deputies of the *Noblesse*, and facing these were those of the Clergy ; between the two privileged orders the middle of the hall was empty. Women of fashion were already crowding into the galleries between the pillars, and the disturbance made by their entry continued for four hours.

OPENING OF THE STATES GENERAL AT VERSAILLES ON THE 5TH MAY, 1789.

Engraving by Helman.



Towards mid-day it came to an end at last. The general effect of the assembly was magnificent ; the *Noblesse*, with their head-dresses of white plumes¹ and their close-fitting coats adorned with cloth-of-gold ; the line of red or violet cassocks of the prelates seated in the front row of the representatives of the Clergy² ; in the background the crowded herds of the worthy *Tiers*, with their black coats and short cloaks ; on the platform the dukes and peers, the governors of provinces, the fifteen privy councillors, and the twenty *maîtres des requêtes*. Suddenly came the cry : “The King !” and the whole assembly rose with a great shout of enthusiasm, while Louis XVI, the Queen, the Princes of the Blood, and the Princesses took their seats amid low bows and profound curtseys, assiduous chamberlains and eager ladies-in-waiting.

And now the King was speaking. His voice rose sharply and clearly in the “august and majestic” silence, which, when he ceased, was broken again by prolonged demonstrations of love and respect. Then the Keeper of the Seals, wearing judge’s robes of purple and crimson, was seen to approach the throne, to drop on one knee to receive His Majesty’s orders, and to return, “walking backwards,” to his stool.³ He read something that could not be heard, and then M. Necker, Director General of Finance, began his report : for an hour, two hours, three hours and more his voice was heard, and after it that of his subordinate, who relieved him in the painful task,⁴ enunciating figures, balancing millions, talking about premiums, and snuff, and advances, and discount-banks, and pensions, and the excise-office. . . .

By the end of an hour a terrible sense of fatigue was overpowering the audience ; the attention of even the most earnest person is apt to go astray in such a labyrinth of figures and estimates. What were the thoughts of those who sat there, forced to keep an

expression of interest and approbation on their faces ? The King, we may suppose, was regretting the day's hunting that he had missed ; the Queen was uneasy, being anxious lest the canopy that surmounted the platform, on which the Court was seated, should fall down. She had learnt by chance that the enormous weight of that baldachin was out of proportion to the strength of the wooden framework that upheld it,¹ and she instructed those concerned "to take great care : the least crack might imperil everything."² The fine ladies were stifling their yawns and regretting they had come, but they dared not leave their places on account of the King's presence. And many were thinking of their dinner-hour, which was long past, while there was no possible means of guessing when the interminable address would come to an end.

Quite lost down there at the back of the hall, in the crowded mass of the members of the *Tiers*, the little Arras lawyer, wrapped up in his cross-grained prejudices, watched with his short-sighted eyes the details of this ceremony, which showed the monarchy as an apparently invincible institution, surrounded by the imposing pageantry of its ancient traditions and "all the pomp of an idolising Court." Never before can he have felt so abject, so helpless, so impotent, so humble. How could he hope—a poor provincial nobody, without relations and without reputation, with his old dyed coat and his puny appearance—how could he hope to make himself felt, even to the most modest extent, in this congress of men who were eminent for their rank or titles, their fortunes, or their talent ?

He rushed boldly at this apparently impossible task. Though he was entirely ignorant of parliamentary tactics, he forced himself to speak—simply for the sake of speaking—in order to inure himself ; for, according to his own confession, "he always trembled as he approached the tribune."³ and "felt quite

benumbed " as he uttered the first words.¹ Nobody listened to him ; for the motions he put forward seemed preposterous to these men who, for the most part, had no suspicion that they were engaged in revolution. They hardly asked the name of this agitated person who was seen springing from his seat at every possible opportunity and flinging himself about amid tumult and laughter, with neck and shoulders shaken by convulsive movements, and hands twitching and trembling nervously.² He remained nameless, associating with no one, and admitted to none of the numerous committees of the Assembly. If any of the reports happened to mention his name, it was to mutilate it : *M. Robert-Pierre*, *M. Robertspierre*,³ *M. Robespierre*,⁴ *M. de Robertz-Pierre*.⁵ Most frequently he appeared as *a member*, or ***.⁶ Thus, when the Archbishop of Aix, Mgr. de Boisgelin,⁷ on the 6th June, called the attention of the deputies of the *Tiers* to the wretched condition of the people, and, to move their compassion more profoundly, showed them a piece of black bread, it was "an unknown" speaker who replied insolently to the prelate⁸: "If your colleagues are so impatient to relieve the sufferings of the poor, renounce the luxury that is so offensive to Christian humility—your carriages, your horses—and sell, if it be necessary, a quarter of the Church's goods. . . ." This unknown speaker was Robespierre. His outburst roused a murmur—of approbation in some quarters, of blame in many others : affairs were still at the stage of polite discussion, and the intervention of this ill-mannered fellow was regarded as offensive.⁹ It injured him rather than added to his reputation ; and when, a few weeks later, in his vexation at not securing a hearing, he claimed that every man, "without fear of complaint, should be allowed to pay to the Assembly the tribute of his opinions," he was interrupted by tumultuous cries of *Order ! Order !* and obliged to leave the

tribune.¹ Anyone but he would have lost courage. He persevered obstinately. In October we find him again "fatiguing" his colleagues. He is concerned this time with a formula for the promulgation of laws; he will have no more of the traditional phrase—"such is our good pleasure," and proposes to substitute for it: "People, this is the law that your representatives have made: be it regarded by all as inviolable and sacred. . . ." A Gascon deputy cries jeeringly: "Oh, let us be off! This is a canticle!" There is a burst of laughter and Robespierre is extinguished in the uproar.²

If we may believe the Memoirs of one of his colleagues of the *Right*, he suffered still worse things. One day, standing in front of his bench, he repeated several times amidst the surrounding hubbub: "I demand a measure . . . I demand a measure . . ." A voice answered: "Give him a measure of oats!"³ He ceased speaking and sat down. But these blows intensified his hatred of superiority of other men and his conviction of his own merits; and both these sentiments fermented in his cankered heart till his day of revenge came at last.

His cruelly wounded vanity found relief only in long letters addressed to his friend Buissart, in which he disparaged all those whose talent or reputation made them prominent in the Assembly—men like Malouet, Target, Mirabeau, d'Espréménil, and Mounier. As early as the 24th May Robespierre had decided that they were very inferior to their fame: "M. Mounier will not play such an important rôle here as in his own province, because he is suspected of having pretensions. . . . He is far, moreover, from being a man of eloquence. I saw M. Target arrive here, preceded by a great reputation. . . . He opened his mouth . . . people were prepared to listen to him with the greatest interest; he said commonplace things with a great

deal of emphasis. . . . The Comte de Mirabeau is of no account, because his moral character has lost him everyone's confidence. . . . But the man most suspected, and most obnoxious to all the patriots, is M. Malouet. . . . That man is armed with impudence and crammed with stratagems, and sets in motion all the springs of intrigue. . . . Speaking generally, the Chamber of the *Noblesse* contains few men of any talent ; every day d'Esprémenil heaps extravagance on extravagance. . . . As for the clergy, there is no kind of artifice that the prelates do not employ for the seduction of the curés ; they have gone so far as to insinuate that we wish to make an attack on the Catholic religion ! ”¹ No one but the peasants with whom he lived, and by whom he is evidently admired, found any favour in his eyes : “ . . . The deputies of Artois are regarded as decided patriots ; that will be found difficult to believe by those who blamed the election of the tillers of the soil who form part of our deputation.”²

There were occasions, however, when his vanity received some measure of satisfaction—on the 10th July, for instance, when he was included in a delegation of twenty-four members, who were deputed to lay before the King the desire of the Assembly that the troops quartered at Versailles should be withdrawn. In addition to an archbishop, a bishop, and a duke, the choice fell on certain deputies of the *Tiers*, of advanced opinions and notoriously turbulent behaviour. It is possible that the others all declined to act, for the step was unconventional : and Maximilien went to the palace with Mirabeau, Barère, Pétion, and Buzot, who already felt for his colleague Robespierre, “ that man with the cat's face,” invincible aversion.³ During the following week Louis XVI. paid a visit to his good town of Paris, and Robespierre joined the procession. He made the journey on foot, was present at the

King's reception at the Hôtel de Ville, and visited the ruins of the Bastille. In a long letter to Buissart he notes with satisfaction that he was escorted thither by armed citizens of the town militia, who "considered it a pleasure to provide an escort of honour for the deputies," who "could walk nowhere without being cheered by the people."¹ It was a flattering ovation, but was intended for the whole body of honourable members of the National Assembly, whom France was expecting to bring about the immediate restoration of the Golden Age. Notwithstanding his hopes, and in spite of his struggles, Robespierre made no mark. How long was he to vegetate like this? The *Actes des Apôtres* ridiculed him, and called him "a poor exhibitioner"; and Mirabeau himself, in whose track he tried to follow, once said of him disdainfully: "No one is afraid of that little *monkey* at the tribune."²

Meanwhile, how did he live? The cost of board and lodging at the inn in the Rue de l'Étang was certainly very small; but none the less it had to be paid, and he was penniless. It has been suggested, by way of solving this enigma, "that he had left some funds behind him at Arras."³ There is nothing to show that this was the case; it seems more probable that he owed all his resources to the generosity of his friend Buissart.⁴ In any case, being very steady and accustomed to self-restraint, he spent but little. Clos, *lieutenant de police* at Versailles, had organised two *tables d'hôte* for the use of needy deputies; one at the Hôtel Charost in the Rue du Bel-Air, where a hundred persons could be accommodated and the dinner cost three francs, and the other at the Hôtel des Invalides in the Avenue Saint-Cloud, where there was room for forty and the meal cost 25 *sols*.⁵ Robespierre and his three rustic companions must have frequented this economical restaurant, which was very close to their lodging. None the less, he was in acute need of money,

and it seems fairly credible that he applied to Madame Necker, as Montlosier¹ declares, for the post of manager in one of the hospitals she had founded. Perhaps he proposed to carry on simultaneously his office as deputy and this other employment, which would enable him to live in a less meagre style, and to provide for the needs of his sister Charlotte, whom he had left at Arras.

A considerable number of his colleagues in the *Tiers*, and of the rank and file of the clergy, were enduring the same state of want. Several of them, whom the expensive life at Versailles had burdened with debt, were thinking of returning home, when, at the sitting of the 12th August, the Duc de Liancourt moved that a daily allowance of eighteen francs should be made to the deputies, with arrears from the 27th April.² This measure—with very rare unanimity—was passed, and saved the situation. Even before it actually became law there were many applicants for something on account. Whether Robespierre was one of them we do not know; but it is certain that on the 1st September he received over 2,200 francs and was secured from need.³ He made no changes in his frugal life; and when, after the King had been taken to Paris by the people, the Assembly followed and held its sittings in the Riding School of the Tuilleries,⁴ he found a lodging at the further end of the Marais, in the house of a man called Humbert.⁵ Here, in the Rue de Saintonge, he shared his rooms, from motives of economy, with a “former captain of dragoons” called Villiers, of whom little is known. If we can put any faith in the anecdotes⁶ narrated by this dragoon later on, Robespierre divided his pay into “three parts”; he kept one-third for himself; he sent another regularly to his sister; and the rest he reserved “for a beloved person who idolised him.” Is it not possible that this “beloved person” may be prosaically

identified with Buissart, and that Robespierre, who was never very free with his confidences, concealed under a veil of romance his harassing obligation to repay his patron at Arras ? We cannot picture him, as a matter of fact, burdening his secluded and laborious life with the distractions of a serious love-affair. He doggedly pursued his task, worked furiously, investigated every sort of question, even those that were most alien to his usual studies, dined for thirty *sous*, and indulged in no distractions.

In his modest lodging, which, according to his brother, was not remarkable for its tidiness,¹ he was still the "furious worker" of Louis-le-Grand, and was bent on contributing a word to every discussion : at the Assembly he was said to "post himself near the Chair so as to seize every chance of speaking, and keep it obstinately."² Most frequently he was made to hold his tongue : his appearance at the tribune was greeted with murmurs of dissatisfaction ; he was known now, and feared ; he was considered a tiresome obstruction. The zeal of the deputies had grown much cooler : many of them took fright at the mad hopes roused by their assembly—hopes which they felt themselves quite incompetent to satisfy : they would have liked to retrace their steps, being uncertain of the path on which they had set out in a way they now felt to be imprudent : therefore they bore but impatiently with this arrogant little limb of the law who, with a sort of aggressive coldness, in the tone of a sour-tempered counsel, pitilessly deduced the logical consequences of the premises blindly stated in the enthusiastic hours of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. He had adopted, by way of a programme, a paradox by Rousseau, whom he perpetually read and re-read : "The general will is always sound, and always conduces to public utility." He assumed the position of counsel to the people, whose sovereignty he proclaimed

on all occasions, demanding for the poor all the enjoyments of the rich ; and his harsh voice and monotonous, uninspiring eloquence rang like the sinister passing-bell of the old order. From his sophistries breathed the spirit of his joyless childhood, his mortified vanity, his disillusionments and his resentments ; we recognise that he had some partisans in the Assembly, but we know of no friends. One day, however, he was elected one of the secretaries,¹ an ephemeral honour that the Assembly bestowed on him no more. To all these men of the old régime he seemed a fanatic who could not be taken seriously ; but behind him the more far-seeing among them surmised the existence of an irresistible force—the force of the People, who for the first time were listening, only too credulously, to words of flattery, and whose quick passions were awaking under the unaccustomed caress.

Robespierre's contemporaries confessed that they could not in the least understand his unexpected rise to fame : it was due neither to his eloquence nor to the sympathy of his colleagues, but to the influence of the popularity he had created for himself—perhaps unconsciously—and so tenderly cherished. He was served by circumstances, moreover : we can watch him mounting as the general level of the Assembly was lowered. By the end of 1789, owing either to weariness, or discouragement, or fear, many of the deputies had handed in their resignation or obtained leave of absence. The party of the Right was shrinking day by day. "Everything is tumbling to pieces in the National Assembly," wrote a representative of the Clergy² ; and Madame Roland, at first so enthusiastic, referred to "a crowd of blockheads at eighteen francs a day, who do not always understand the question on which they are called to vote."³ And then, close to the Assembly, was founded the Jacobin Club, which claimed, like a Privy Council, to prepare and study

measures before discussing them from the tribune of the Parlement. As the doors of this club were very widely opened, all the monarchical deputies who had become members considered their dignity was compromised by its democratic atmosphere, and deserted in a body during the last days of March, 1790, to found a more polished society ; and room was thus left for the more advanced spirits, who at once chose Robespierre as their chairman.¹ A similar exodus happened a year later. The advanced thinkers of the preceding year had become reactionaries, and in their turn left the club, which they hoped their action would ruin. Its revolutionary ardour was, on the contrary, increased ; and as it issued orders to more than four hundred affiliated societies, and imposed its will on the moribund Assembly, the impolitic defection of the moderate members left the power in the hands of the demagogues. On the 17th July, 1791, the rioters flocking round the altar of the *Patrie* in the Champ de Mars shouted : " No more Louis XVI. ; our King is Robespierre ! "² Meditating on these things, forty years later, an old disillusioned democrat made this observation : " When it comes to depending on honest men in revolutions, there is nothing to do but to wrap oneself up in one's cloak. . . ." ³

After this, strange things were seen. On the 30th September, 1791, the broken-down, worn-out National Assembly came to an end, and a crowd gathered round the Riding School to watch the departure of the deputies whom they had once welcomed so enthusiastically. They greeted in cold silence all these men whom two years and a half of political life had depreciated in value, and whom, in their disillusionment, they regarded as perjurors, betrayers, and false comrades. But when Robespierre appeared on the arm of his colleague Pétion the shouting crowd surged forward to do him honour ; crowns of oak-leaves were

held out to him by eager hands ; a woman brought her child to receive his blessing ; a confusion of cries filled the air : *Long live liberty ! Long live Robespierre ! Long live the Incorruptible !* This last was the word inscribed on the frame of his portrait, which was exhibited in the Salon of that year : it was the epithet he had applied to himself in April, 1789, in his appeal to the electors of Artois. And when the two popular deputies tried to escape from the ovation by jumping into a hackney-coach, the frenzied mob unharnessed the horses and dragged the carriage themselves.¹

A month later Robespierre, accompanied by Pétion, set out for his own town of Arras, where he had been soured by so many unfortunate misadventures. On this occasion, from Bapaume onwards, two hundred horsemen surrounded his carriage, and he was received in the evening at the illuminated gate of Arras by a band of old men wearing civic crowns, women dressed in white, and children scattering flowers. He was fêted with bouquets, speeches, and adoration. Buissart and his like were exultant.² On the 28th November Robespierre returned to Paris,³ and finally established himself in the house of Duplay the carpenter.

The reader will have perceived already that this is no attempt to write a *Life of Robespierre*, but merely an effort to pierce, if possible, the dark veil that shrouds the psychological characteristics of the chief actor in the drama we are about to present. To examine his unhappy childhood, the wounds to his youthful pride, the difficulties and mortifications of his early struggles, is to detect, to a certain extent, the causes of his sombre temperament, his lust for retaliation, and his savage suspicion—almost amounting to madness—that he was the victim of persecution.

Pétion, who may have regarded him as a friend and knew him well, described him as “detecting plots,

betrayals, and precipices everywhere ; never forgiving an offence to his vanity ; being irritated by the slightest suspicion ; always believing that others were thinking about him with a view to persecuting him.”¹ In every man he scented an enemy, either to himself or to the people, with whom he made common cause. If he endowed the mob with every virtue and considered them infallible, it was because they idolised him and their shouts of applause avenged him for the rebuff of fate. The veneration he professed for the poor and outcast was not, as a matter of fact, the noble compassion that always harasses generous hearts and shows itself in active charity, but a sort of theoretical pity, expressed in dangerous flattery. Was he sincere ? Certainly—or he thought himself so ; without discerning that he loved the people, “the people who alone were great and worthy of respect in his eyes,”² because they gave him adulation, a new delight of which his life had hitherto been bare.³

This, too, was the reason of his content with the simple folk who gave him shelter. With his entirely literary education and his habits of mind one would have expected him to prefer more refined surroundings ; but in them he would not have been certain of predominance, whereas among the Duplays his undeniable superiority secured him from all rivalry. The carpenter, a man “of unassailable probity,” had but little education ; his wife, as we have already seen, had no pretensions beyond managing her household well and providing for her children. The second daughter, Sophie, who was already married to a lawyer of Issoire called Auzat, had left the house when Robespierre came to it ; the three others, Éléonore, Victoire and Elizabeth, remained there as long as he lived in it ; and though the eldest, we are assured, was “one of those resolute and upright characters whose model must be sought in the glorious times of the ancient

republics,"¹ he was very certain to find in these young women nothing but unfailing admiration. There were other advantages that kept him in this worthy family circle : being a deputy no longer, he was again without funds. We do not know what agreement he made with Duplay ; but there are certain indications that the honest carpenter, being only too happy to shelter the eminent man whose fine speeches he absorbed in the neighbouring club, was generous enough to give him free board and lodging.² In the long run Duplay lost nothing by this arrangement, for later on he was often employed by the Government in carpenter's work on a large scale ; and in September, 1793, he took the oath as a member—though a far from assiduous member—of the Revolutionary Tribunal, an office that secured him eighteen francs a day, the pay of a deputy.³ If Robespierre was not in a position to remunerate his host, it was not for lack of will. When the elective judges were instituted he had been appointed president of the tribunal of Versailles,⁴ but after some hesitation he refused this eminently restful office.⁵ On the 10th June, 1791, the Parisians elected him Public Prosecutor to the criminal court, with a salary of eight thousand francs. This time he accepted, and took part for some weeks, after the dissolution of the Assembly, in the preparatory labours of the court : then sent in his resignation.⁶ To what, then, did he aspire ? To something better, doubtless. At this time he was publishing a little daily newspaper, which had but a brief life and was notoriously unsuccessful.⁷ In it he was careful not to offend the Court, or, at all events, the King, and in every number protested his devotion to the monarchical Constitution established by the Constituent Assembly, and solemnly accepted by Louis XVI. Was he hesitating ? Or was he even, as has been said,⁸ expecting the King to offer him the coveted post of tutor to the Dauphin ? It

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seems certain that the Court made "advances" to him ; he recognised this himself in an allusion "to the parties who attempted to seduce him."¹ It seems probable that his name was mentioned—at all events in the Jacobin Club²—when the choice of a tutor for the heir to the throne was in question, and perhaps magnificent possibilities opened out before his mind. Can we ever fathom the dreams of these men who, by dint of mere talking, had just beaten down a monarchy with fourteen centuries behind it, without knowing what they intended to put in its place ? Was it to be a tribune or a regent, a dictator, a consul, or a protector ? After the escapade of the flight to Varennes it was this problem alone that postponed the King's deposition, and everyone was looking for the man who should replace him at the head of a Republic that was still only vaguely desired. And among the people the chosen name was the *Incorrputible*.³ To mention a man's name in connection with a post that will shortly be vacant is necessarily to raise in his mind the hope of obtaining it, and to create at the same time a spirit of hatred and anger among his rivals. This was the whole point at issue in the battle that raged for seven years round the shattered throne, that fierce, abominable battle in which the Revolution was destined to founder.

On the opening of the Convention the camps were formed. They were of unequal strength : Robespierre, the first man to be elected by the capital, was supported by all the Parisian members—Marat, Danton, Collot d'Herbois, Billaud-Varenne, the entire *Mountain*, the nickname by which his army was to be known. His adversaries were more numerous, and had for their picked troops the brilliant phalanx of the Gironde, including Vergniaud, Bressot, Buzot, Guadet, Louvet, and Barbaroux ; and it was they who first opened fire.

The hatred of both sides, becoming more bitter at every attack, burst out into invectives, expressions of contempt, and finally threats of slaughter.

The Girondins, armed with wisdom and eloquence, wounded their enemy in his most sensitive spot ; and, stung by their disdainful sarcasms, Robespierre—always obstinate and hot-headed—fretted, protested, raged and wrangled. His own method was to deliver endless homilies, in which he celebrated his virtues and his devotion to the cause of the people, and which were curtailed by cries of *Order ! Cut it short ! Put the motion !* Amid grumbling murmurs he would return quivering to his seat, only to reappear at the tribune and cling to it while the tempest raged round him.¹ In the Convention, of which most of the members were moderate, there was not one as yet who thought him a man to be feared : he first became so at the time of the King's trial, when he firmly demanded the monarch's head, without debate, without inquiry, without discussion, and without defence.² “The greatest of all criminals cannot be judged ; he is already condemned !” This ferocity seemed so strange that Buzot objected : “Are those who oppose the King's being heard afraid of what he will say ?”³ The regicide vote having been passed, it was Robespierre again who acted as impresario of the terrible drama. Feeling that the Convention—horrorstruck by the verdict it had just given—was softening, and might wish to grant a pardon, or at least a respite, he insisted that the execution should take place without delay, opposed the hearing of the defending counsel, and, when the Assembly hesitated, stirred up the madmen with whom the public tribunals were crammed, and appealed to the Commune of Paris, the armed sections of the city, and the clubs.⁴

He triumphed : he had found his road : his colleagues underestimated him and refused to admit

his superiority : he would have the people on his side, then, the credulous people, who were so unreasoning in their infatuations and so easy to win, and were a force all the more to be feared because no one as yet appreciated their newly-acquired power. His party should be the innumerable horde of simple souls who would believe in his genius, of envious persons whose passion of hatred he would foster, of all who laboured and suffered, whom he would inspire, not with resignation, but with the spirit of revolt. If, as is probable, this programme was not clearly formulated in his mind, it was so congenial to his vindictive instincts that he strove to carry it out, in spite of obstacles that were disconcerting to this timorous creature, by nature a wrangler rather than a fighter. He, who had proposed the abolition of capital punishment, had just been successfully demanding the King's head ; two months later he would be clamouring—unsuccessfully—for that of the Queen¹ ; and soon, with a fury that resembled courage, he would fall upon the Girondins who despised him. He described them to the Jacobins as “ sharpening daggers to attack the patriots ”² ; and in the Convention he called them “ the vilest of mortals and the assassins of their country.”

He declared he was ill and worn out by four years of struggle ; he no longer had the strength to fight ; but he urged the Commune “ to unite itself with the people . . . ” and on the 31st May, the populace having been roused by that appeal, he put an end to Vergniaud with one decisive blow,³ and then, effacing himself, left Marat to perfect the work. And when, in October, the Mountain completed this brilliant victory by the arrest of the seventy-four obscure deputies who were guilty of treating with the Gironde, he made no opposition to a measure which did, he declared, “ everlasting honour to the Convention ”⁴ ; but—fearing lest so many victims might prove too great a burden for

the scaffold, and perhaps one of his envied rivals might escape—he asserted that “ the dignity of the Assembly bade him concern himself only with *the leaders . . .* their punishment would appal traitors and save the *Patrie.*”

Thus perished Vergniaud, Brissot, and twenty of their friends. Those who succeeded in escaping, such as Guadet, Barbaroux, Buzot, and a great number of others, succumbed after living for months of misery in one hiding-place after another : and all of them, including Pétion, the *dear Pétion* of days gone by, died cursing Robespierre, whose path was cleared by their removal. Everyone who stood in his way, everyone who mortified him, disappeared : the *virtuous* Roland, whom he never forgave for being endowed with that adjective, that insolent imitation of his own title, the *Incorrumpible*¹; the Duc d’Orléans-Égalité, a dangerous rival ; Madame Roland, who had formerly admitted him to her Salon, but only gave him a limited amount of her confidence and rather a distant kind of friendship ; Condorcet, who had shown him in his true light, attributing to him all the characteristics, not of a leader of the State, but of “ the leader of a sect,” and had advised his own friends “ not to lift the club of Hercules for the crushing of that flea, which would disappear in the winter.”²

Quit of his enemies he loomed large in the empty space they had left, and enjoyed an illusive sense of victory. Charlotte Corday’s knife had rid him of Marat, a competitor who, if extravagant, was to be feared. He was now a member of the Committee of Public Safety,³ and was soon to be President of the Convention⁴ ; but as fast as he rose from height to height he detected, from the last summit he had reached, fresh obstacles and fresh enemies. New arms became necessary to him. He urged the re-organisation of the Revolutionary Tribunal, whose “ inertia ”

made him anxious.¹ He “purified” the Jacobins, expelling from the club all the ex-nobles, all the foreigners, and all the bankers ; for, on the information of some unknown body of police, he suspected the existence of dubious intrigues that were repugnant to his integrity, and therefore collected materials for a batch of “the corrupt.” There was also to be a batch of “fanatics,” which was followed by one of “the over-indulgent.” If he extolled liberty of opinion he allowed no one to think differently from himself. Everything that varied from his own conception of government was “villainous,” and a hecatomb was the result : first Hébert and his followers—*Père Duchesne*, who was guilty of referring to “those ambitious persons who, the more power they have, are but the more insatiable. . . .”²; then Danton and his friends—Danton, in whose company he had quite recently dined on the occasion of a country excursion to Charenton.³ They had embraced one another during dessert.⁴ This time Robespierre took precautions : if the blow were not skilfully dealt it would react upon himself, for Danton had many partisans. The trap, then, must be prepared with really artistic perfidy. When the Convention learnt of the matter the appointed victims were already in prison : there was an uproar : Robespierre silenced it,⁵ and without the loss of a moment—“he took no rest,”⁶ we are told—he carried the affair through. It was necessary to prevent the indignant eloquence of the accused from disturbing the Tribunal ; so an ancient decree was unearthed which deprived them of the right to speak. It was to be feared that they might excite the general public present in the court when the sentence of death was pronounced : therefore it was read in the absence of the condemned.

Among the latter was Camille Desmoulins, whose schoolfellow Robespierre had been at Louis-le-Grand,

and at whose marriage to Lucile he had been a witness at Saint-Sulpice. He had dined with these friends of his very often ; he had wished to be their brother-in-law¹ ; he had danced their child upon his knees. . . . No matter ; Camille must die like the rest. He must die as all had died, or were doomed to die, who could have any picture in their memory of the poor scholar at the college with his torn coat and his lack of shoes, or of the half-starved barrister of Arras, begging briefs from the solicitors ; or of the deputy derided in the States General and cruelly baited in the Convention by the insolent Gironde. It seems as though, on his march towards a goal that none but himself could see, he aimed at wiping out every witness and every memory of his past humiliations and the pitiful opening of his career.

The loving and innocent Lucile herself must die, because she had not choked back the cry of despair wrung from her by the death of her beloved Camille. With Hébert's wife, and with Chaumette—idol of Paris for a day—she serenely mounted the scaffold, because she had known the suspicious tyrant before the days of his power, and he feared her avenging discernment.

Of what, then, was he dreaming ? No one knows. Did he himself know ? He was now on the very pinnacle : he held in the hollow of his hand the Convention² and the Jacobins, the Commune of Paris, the Parisian army, the Electoral College, all the clubs in France, the Revolutionary Tribunal—which he had “purged” by stealth³—and the lives and fortunes of all the population.⁴ He was heard now with respect—or with cowardice, for the heroic days were over. His turn had come—at last !—to see others cringing ; and now, in the great silence that death had spread around him, he was seized with a sort of fear. At his side were two faithful comrades : Saint-Just, cock of the walk,

handsome and brave, sententious, mysterious—and Couthon, who was cultivated and acute in mind, but completely crippled by paraplegia of long standing¹: an affable, terrible man, who "drank blood" with a face "like an angel," and was limited almost entirely to a diet of almond-water and almond-milk.⁵ With the exception of these two disciples, of whom one was a cripple and the other frequently in camp, absolute solitude reigned round the man "who held the sceptre of death,"⁶ and whose mere appearance was as disquieting as a phantom at one's heels.

The disclosure of his intentions was awaited. What use would he make of his power? What would be the results, what were the aims of all these massacres, all this shedding of blood, which was still flowing every day?

The time of waiting lasted for a month. At last, on the 7th May, 1794, he mounted the tribune at the beginning of the sitting, and, amid the weighty silence that his appearance on the scene now created, he began to read a report. In his opening words he asserted that France was at the summit of happiness: "It is in prosperity," he said, "that nations should bethink themselves and listen to the voice of wisdom. . . ." By the voice of wisdom he meant his own; as for the prosperity—on the previous day twenty-four heads had been cut off in Paris, and on that day itself twenty-five were doomed to fall. . . . Robespierre continued, even more nervously than usual: the twitch that contorted his pock-marked face, the feverish thrumming of his fingers on the wood of the tribune, betrayed his agitation. Save for a few insults sputtered at his defeated enemies—at Condorcet, "the academician whom all parties despised," and at Danton, "the most dangerous of the conspirators, if he had not been the most cowardly"—this elaborately laboured speech kept to the high altitudes of metaphysics. It was a



Le jeune vert s'assint alors, habit nankin rayé vert,
gilet bleu ruyé bleu, cravatte blanche et gaine rouge.

(croquis d'après nature à une séance de la Convention.)

ROBESPIERRE.

Reproduced from the *Mémoires de Barras*. Hachette's edition.
Sketch from life, taken during a sitting of the Convention.

profession of faith in God, and belief in the life eternal. Certain passages in it attained to great eloquence ; but its progress was so tortuous and its development so overlaid with ornament that its hearers could not guess whither it was leading them.¹ They applauded whenever it was possible. Robespierre concluded by bringing forward a decree in which the French nation was to recognise the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul, an end that produced a sort of stupefaction. The speech had been regarded at first as a mere exercise in oratory, "with no aim and no object" ; when it was understood that he was asking for votes he was obeyed enthusiastically : voices were heard urging that the speech should be printed : but Couthon, having been carried to the tribune by the *gendarme* who served him as a beast of burden, argued that " Providence had been offended," and that " the mere fact of printing would not suffice to avenge it."² He proposed that this edifying discourse should be sent to the troops, to all constituted bodies and all popular societies, that it should be printed on placards and posted up in the streets and the camps, translated into every language, and published throughout the Universe.³ Repeated applause followed ; the motion was passed without discussion ; and in the evening the sermon was read again in the Jacobin Club, and was greeted with fresh acclamations and frenzied stamping of feet.

What admirable docility on the part of the French people ! Those who, only a few weeks before, had crowded to the sacrilegious ceremonies of the Cult of Reason and had applauded the parading of an opera-singer in the choir of Notre-Dame, forthwith turned right-about-face ; and, during the days that followed the publication in the streets of " the sublime Robespierre's " speech, the Parisians did nothing but talk—with perfectly sincere emotion—of the Supreme Being

and His approaching *fête*, fixed to take place in a month's time. Never, in the course of the past four years, had the *Bon Dieu* enjoyed such a vogue. Deputations streamed up to the bar of the Convention to congratulate it on its decision. Never, in any parliamentary assembly, had the Creator of all things been so fervently extolled; never were blessings showered with greater emotion upon His Divine Providence, to which all the orators attributed—without a smile—the happiness that France was enjoying.

Now while the irresponsible and thoughtless were in this state of ecstasy a number of the Conventionists were silently fuming. The free-thinkers, and all who were sceptics either from self-interest or by conviction, were furious at finding themselves associated with this “bigotry,” this scandalous reaction towards the superstitions of the age of tyranny. They had all applauded Robespierre, certainly, to avoid calling attention to themselves as the opponents of a man like that; but they were disquieted by his prodigious popularity, and still more by the future that his coming pontificate seemed to presage.

Among these malcontents was Vadier, the most important member of the Committee of General Security. He was a native of Ariège, with a long nose and cadaverous complexion—tall, lean, bony, and as ungainly as an old puppet. In the Convention, which was composed to a great extent of young men, Vadier was considered old because he was fifty-eight. His terrible Gascon accent, his unexpected buffooneries, his incorrigible irony, and “his sixty virtuous years,” of which he boasted on every occasion, gave him the character of a sort of wag from whom the Assembly had sometimes derived amusement. Having been deputy for the *sénéchaussée* of Pamiers in the States General he had witnessed the painful beginning of

Robespierre's public life. To the latter he was a strange contrast. The jocular southerner, who could never hold his tongue, had no sympathy with the concentrated, cold, laborious man of the north, who had never been seen to laugh. But they had fought the Gironde side by side; and Vadier, who had delusions on the subject of his own importance, had "come out well" in the struggle against Danton, though he took no very serious view of the whipper-snapper whom he had seen in the Constituent Assembly, without a sou to bless himself with, trying to make his way in the face of taunts and insults.

Now that this feeble pupil of Rousseau was posing as a "high-priest," and was re-creating the abolished Deity, the old Gascon follower of Voltaire did not spare his sarcasms; and, growing more and more excited by the heat of his own jeers, he decided that he must bar the road of the fanatical psalm-singer, and rid himself of "this set of imbeciles who wished to go back to saying Mass."

It was an arduous enterprise and in undertaking it a man was risking his head; but when Vadier had a scheme he did not easily relinquish it, and was the less likely to do so when he foresaw an opportunity of raising a laugh and of vanquishing the Incorruptible by ridicule, the only weapon he knew how to wield. All that was necessary was to hit upon some farcical idea which should serve as a theme for his jests. All the police of the Republic being at his command he was able to employ detectives who were highly skilled in this class of investigation. Either chance favoured him, or he had dropped a word of his project to his two confidential agents—Sénar, a dubious character whose fingers were in everyone's pie, and Héron, a cynical, dangerous kind of cut-throat. One of these two—it seems probable that it was Sénar—laid one day a little bundle of papers on Vadier's desk. One glance at

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them was enough. Vadier, already bursting with impatience at the thought of the fine trick he was going to play, scented triumph, and chuckled : " I have solved the riddle ! "

II

THE SEER

THE functions of Héron and Sénar on the Committee of General Security were important, but secret.¹ The exploits by which they drew Vadier's attention to themselves deserve to be described with some detail.

Héron, a native of Saint-Lunaire,² after serving for nine years in the merchant navy, had entered the King's service in 1772. Five years later he married, in the chapel of Saint-Martin de Terlabouck, a parish in Cancale, a young girl called Modeste Desbois—"tall, handsome, and well-made"—one of a family who held an honourable position in that town.³ In 1782, when he was thirty-six years of age and had reached the rank of lieutenant, he bore an excellent character; and his spotless integrity and very complimentary *dossier*⁴ won for him the confidence of the Government. He was commissioned to travel to Havana, and there receive a million piastres in the name of certain Parisian bankers.

At this point the story suffers a sad change.

Héron reappeared after six months of travel, of which a hundred and ninety-four days were spent afloat: he did not bring back the money, but claimed for his expenses, estimated at the lowest rate possible, 117,402 *livres*. He was offered 20,000, while the bankers for their part claimed their million piastres, which their correspondents in Havana assured them had been delivered to Captain Héron. Now the latter could prove nothing, since the documents that showed

he had not received the money had been stolen from him. . . . Being aware that he was suspected, he fell into a fury, declaring in his rage that he was the victim of a disgraceful trick, calling the minister and financiers "a criminal horde," and describing their plots as "works of darkness." He was really beside himself : on every hand he detected spies and agitators, paid to compass his ruin : he would draw his sword in the street, and never went out without a pistol, which he held under the noses of the passers-by—all probably assassins. "Princes, nobles, ministers, financiers, lawyers, emissaries of the Court, agents of the police, everyone, down to the vilest tool of crime," was in league against him.¹ In the hope of sending him mad, they subjected him to the most horrible tortures ; as, for instance, on that day—the 11th February, 1788—when he was forced to enter a room in his own dwelling in the Rue Saint-Florentin, to find there his wife in the arms of a lieutenant of the Beauce regiment, "a secret emissary of the Court."² The indecent scene he was forced to witness proved to him abundantly that his wife, the gentle Modeste Desbois, was in league with his enemies. Héron, controlling himself, went away to "vent his indignation in the bosom of some friends," and when he returned to his home "the two monsters" had taken flight, his strong-box had been broken open, and the 800,000 *livres* it contained had disappeared ! The next event was the arrival of the Desbois family, who came from Saint-Malo to make him take back his wretched wife : whereupon his staircase became the scene of daily ambuscades, shrieks, disputes, and sword-practice with a naval cutlass. His landlord, Follope the chemist, on trying to interfere, received several blows in the face from a clenched fist : the terrified neighbours locked themselves into their rooms : the house became uninhabitable.

The Revolution was at hand. Héron, drunk with revenge, threw himself into it heart and soul. We find his name wherever there was an uproar to be made or blows to be dealt. When the Châtelet issued a writ against Marat it was Héron who offered him shelter ; and while the King's officers were seeking the journalist in the Rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie, he was safely hidden in Héron's rooms on the third floor, the windows of which looked out on the Rue Saint-Honoré. The ex-naval lieutenant reappears at the gates of Paris receiving Barbaroux' Marseillais¹ ; we hear of his being five times wounded during the attack on the Tuileries on the 10th August ; he hurried to Versailles when he learnt that a blow was about to be struck there, and he had the joy of witnessing, and doubtless taking part in, the murder of the ex-minister de Lessart, one of his "persecutors." Having been admitted to the Committee of General Security in the place of Maillard the *Hard-Hitter*, who had presided at the September Massacres and had lately died in harness, Héron was put at the head of the "executive agents," a band of rascally officials who—under the title of "bearers of orders"—ransomed the *suspects* whom they were deputed to arrest, and appropriated the greater part of the booty. Such, for instance, was the man Morel, in whose rooms was discovered, after Thermidor, an immense amount of church-plate and other silver, with clocks and other objects of various kinds² ; and Longueville-Clémentière, who filled so many chests in his house with his collection of jewels, watches, valuable weapons, and clocks, that several barrows were required to carry the spoils to the Committee.³

Why does history, in studying the Revolution, confine its inquiries so closely to the chief actors ? A review of their surroundings might bring to light a great number of subordinate figures, the scrutiny of whom would dissipate a variety of fogs and solve many

an enigma. Héron was one of those obscure figures whom the great historians despise. He was, however, a most complete example of those pirates who raised money by supplying the scaffold with its daily food : and, his object being to recover his lost 800,000 *livres*, he trained his hounds to hunt the rich, reserving for himself the more important affairs. The bankers were the usual objects of his attacks : his *dossier* abounds in denunciations of financiers, especially those whom he accused of having ruined him.¹ It was through him that the three Vandenyvers, all bankers, were sent to the guillotine ; it was to him that the Committee entrusted the lucrative task of affixing the seals to the property of the farmers-general.² His lodging in the Rue Saint-Florentin was a “denunciation-office,”³ and that he might work there in peace he sent all the other inhabitants of the house to the guillotine : the chemist Follope, from the ground-floor ; Citoyenne Buard, from the first floor ; Citoyen Letellier, *alias* Bultier, who lived on the second. They met again on the 11th Floréal, when they were all in the same tumbril with their neighbour “the infamous *ci-devant*” Marquise de Crussol d’Amboise, whose windows overlooked Héron’s courtyard. The latter fished in all waters, provided there were plenty of fish : his opinions never stood in his way. It is said that Robespierre employed him—imprudently—to spy upon the Committee of General Security ; and it is likely enough that he did. In March, 1794, when the Convention issued a warrant for Héron’s arrest on the denunciation of Tallien and Bourdon de l’Oise, Robespierre warmly defended him, declaring that “if the Assembly desired to gain the palm of glory, taste the happiness of feeling hearts . . . and overthrow faction with a vigorous arm . . . men such as he were indispensable.” He therefore demanded that the order “illegally obtained from the Convention”⁴ should be annulled. He had his way ;

and Héron, licensed by the Incorruptible, was able to continue his exploits in freedom.

It was his habit to carry a hunting-knife, thrust into a white belt; under his coat he had two blunderbusses, some pocket pistols, a second belt holding more pistols, a dagger, and a little stiletto. "When he walked out he was a complete battery." His men called him *the Chief*.¹

Sénar² was quite a different kind of man: a quiet, delicate-looking creature, who kept as a relic of his early education the manners of the "aristocrat" he had been, and was, perhaps, to the end. He is a strange and sinister figure. The son of a *procureur*,³ he chose to be called Sénar des Lys, and married a god-daughter of Louis XVI. and Marie-Antoinette⁴: it is even asserted that his marriage-contract was honoured with the signatures of the King and Queen. He was a barrister, first at l'Ile-Bouchard, where his father practised, and afterwards at Tours, where he settled in 1791: he posed as an ardent defender of religion and the Monarchy, and pleaded before the bench the cause of the refractory priests whom the new laws deprived of their cures. He was charitable and kind to the poor, and hostile to demagogues. He was once seen, at a dinner-party, to trample the *bonnet rouge* underfoot and refuse to wear the tri-coloured cockade.⁵ But hardly was the Republic proclaimed before he transformed himself, without a moment's notice, into a full-fledged Jacobin, divorced his wife after two years of marriage, sought for offices in the public eye, was elected *procureur* of the Commune of Tours, and then made president of a military commission which installed the guillotine in that town, fixing it immovably "on a base of masonry" in the Place d'Aumont. It is an unprecedented fact that this commission, before its session began, proceeded in a body to hear a solemn Mass, in order to

secure the blessing of the Most High upon its labours. It was not, it may be noted, distinguished for any great severity : in the course of six weeks it condemned six accused persons and acquitted a hundred and thirty-five. This disquieting irregularity of conduct satisfied no one. Sénar was regarded with suspicion by his compatriots : called a traitor by some, a renegade by others, a hypocrite by all—feared, humiliated, despised, and denounced. Some mysterious protective power guarded him in every danger. When he was ejected from his post and imprisoned he was set free by a certain obscure person called Mogué, who is thought to have been a secret agent of Robespierre. He went to Paris, protested against the action of his accusers, and reappeared at Tours at the end of a few days, encompassed by four ruffians from Héron's gang¹ and armed with an order from the Committee of General Security, which restored him to his office of *procureur* to the Commune. He took rooms in the Rue d'Orléans, in the house of the executioner Louis-Charles-Martin Sanson, the son of the great Sanson of Paris, and pursued his magnificent career. To his title of President of the first Military Commission of the Army of the West he added those of National Agent, Correspondent of the Central Commission of the Representatives of the People, and President of the first Revolutionary Committee of the Department of L'Indre-et-Loire. How did he find time to give his services also to the Committee of General Security, which had added this much-occupied man to its ranks ? Nor is it easy to understand how Sénar, who was now settled in Paris—where he lived in the Rue de la Loi, in the *Hôtel des Lillois*, with a certain Dulac, a personal agent and “ friend ” of Couthon²—could none the less rule over Touraine and keep offices that required him to live in his own province. There are records of his presence both at Tours and in Paris during the spring

of the year II : yet it would seem that in the early days of Floréal his zeal at the Committee of Security had already gained him Vadier's esteem and Héron's goodwill, for the former treated him as a confidant and the latter as an influential comrade. Héron one day came to visit Sénar in the study where he was at work. "I wish to ask you," said the ex-sailor, "to do me a service. . . . If you will do what I ask I shall give you on the spot a bill for six hundred *livres*; I shall add a present of three thousand *livres* and shall get you appointed to a post worth ten thousand *livres*." After this preamble he stated his request. He merely desired Sénar to insert the name of Modeste Desbois, his unworthy spouse, in a certain report, "in order to have her guillotined." "My wife," he continued, "is a conspirator : she belongs to Saint-Malo, and the report on which you are engaged offers a more certain opportunity than I am likely to find again ; when a person's name is put into an affair the thing moves : the names are called, the heads fall, and *pouf ! pouf ! pouf !* the thing's done !" Sénar declares that he rejected this proposition "with disdainful gravity."¹ He was not heroic, however, but simply "morde, peevish, distrustful, soured by prolonged misfortunes,"² or petrified by terror. He was afraid of Héron, who took a delight in frightening him. One day they went together to the Palais de Justice to visit Fouquier-Tinville, who received them with a smiling face. Sénar, disquieted by his surroundings, asked if there were any risk of his being taken off to the tribunal. "I have nothing against you," answered Fouquier pleasantly, "but if Robespierre wishes it you will certainly come, and then I could make you go up my little steps." "But I am a patriot," groaned Sénar ; "do you condemn patriots, then ?" "Patriot or not, that is no business of mine ; I am only a passive creature ; when Robespierre has

once named a man to me, he must die." Greatly agitated, Sénar sank into an arm-chair in a faint. When he came to himself he heard the two other men pursuing their conversation, quite unconcerned by his indisposition. "Heads are falling like slates," said Fouquier; and Héron replied optimistically: "You needn't worry, things will go better yet. . . ." ¹

When Vadier, in his search for a scheme that would enable him to throw ridicule on Robespierre, entrusted to these two comrades the task of finding him something really funny, the *dossier* they dug out for him contained some amusing documents that had been collected by Chaumette, who had gone to the guillotine, and had formerly been *procureur* to the Commune of Paris. Among them Vadier discovered, with special interest, the report of a search carried out in January, 1793, by the police-superintendent of the Section des Droits de l'Homme, in the lodging of a certain Widow Godefroid, a dressmaker who had rooms on the fifth floor of a house in the Rue des Rosiers, overlooking the courtyard.² This widow lived with an old woman named Catherine Théot, who, after being a long time in service in small middle-class households, had late in life blossomed into a visionary and a thaumaturgist. The police having heard of them through the denunciations of their neighbours, Catherine Théot and the Widow Godefroid were taken off to the *Mairie*, where they were put through an examination that must have been very entertaining. They were sent home again; but Chaumette had kept some of the papers seized in their rooms, and it was this collection of jargon that Vadier was now thumbing. First came a note-book of six pages, a fairly diverting sort of journal, containing notes very carefully dated, but not easily understood :

“ 23rd December, 1790.—Well, there are calamities happening and there are likely to be more of them ; but one must not be disturbed by them.

“ 23rd January, 1791.—There are some who have passed from this world into the other ; but one must not be disturbed by it, for it is merely an absence.

“ 23rd March, 1791.—One must not be disturbed by the events that are taking place on the earth, because the time has not yet come. . . . We are satisfied with some of these men who are attached to us.

“ 10th June, 1791.—HE came as usual ; HE gave me his blessing ; we have nothing unusual to arrange, because we have great labours. . . . Men must not be impatient and must prepare themselves, because the time draws near.

“ 2nd August, 1791.—HE passed by a few days ago ; HE gave me his blessing, and HE repeated : ‘ Prayer, above all.’

“ 5th November, 1791.—Do not be impatient to withstand these workers of iniquity, for the time will come, and is now coming, we repeat for the third time, when they will be so wretched that they will not know whether they are on their heads or their heels.”

The *dossier* also contained six rough drafts of letters dictated to the Widow Godefroid by Catherine Théot, who could not write. These missives, which were undated and gave no evidence of their destination, did not seem at first sight any less obscure than the journal :

“ I have the honour of having this written to you : it is not for you alone, but for all your colleagues, to make copies of it and give them to them that they may inform themselves with regard to the great marvel of God, and that you also may inform yourself because you are still altogether in error. . . . You should be

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thankful to Paul and Augustine for having led you into error, because you believe that they have the light while they are in darkness just like yourself. . . . That is why he is going to make this new Eve appear in the midst of the world to bring forth children for him in the truth."

So far a simple mind would have perceived no connection between this gibberish and Robespierre ; but Vadier, whose mind had a turn for extravagance, and who—priding himself as he did on his scepticism, or rather, atheism—had been unable to swallow the mystic discourse on the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul, clearly discerned how such a note as this might be turned to account :

" I have the honour of having this written to you, as I have great confidence in you and you like to do the works of God, that is why God has chosen you to be the angel of His council and the guide of His army to lead them into the way of God. . . . I beg you to beg the Assembly to have processions arranged, so that the Lord may send us rain . . . and to have a mandate issued and signed by the Assembly. . . ."

Supposing—and why should one not suppose ?—that this request had been addressed to the In-corruptible, was there not rich material for quips and jibes in the application to him of these titles of " angel of the Lord " and " guide of the heavenly armies " ? And indeed it looked as if Robespierre had been obeying the injunctions of the oracle in the Rue des Rosiers. " The mandate " he had recently read in the Convention, which had hastened to " sign " it ; and as for the " procession," an early date had been appointed for it, and already large numbers of workmen were busily erecting its altars. Unfortunately the letter

appeared to date from a time when Robespierre was hardly emerging from obscurity, and Vadier, before he could ridicule the pontiff adequately, required some more recent information. It was necessary to make sure that Catherine Théot had not died in the course of the past eighteen months, and that she had not left Paris nor given up her communications with invisible powers. Héron and Sénar, therefore, received orders to set their most skilful agents to work to hunt out the prophetess.

Though Vadier was doubtless ignorant of the fact, Paris was swarming with mystery-mongers of this sort : there were enough to satisfy every form of credulity. Since the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the closing of the churches, the people, being deprived of the priests they were accustomed to revere and of the pious ceremonies they still loved, either from real faith or mere tradition, had adopted the most naive practices in the hope of finding in them a little of the mystery and poetry of the abolished form of worship. When faith is eclipsed devotion still lives on, finding its nourishment where it can. The inspiration of somnambulists and the magic of fortune-tellers have never been so much the fashion as then : it was the time of the great renown of Mademoiselle Lenormand, a red-faced Norman woman who disguised herself as "a young American" and, with the help of a baker's boy, "drew the horoscope" of those who were anxious about the future. Later on she boasted—it is not necessary to put any faith in her bragging—that in this very month of Floréal of the year II she had among her clients Barras, Saint-Just, Barère, and Robespierre himself, for whom she felt only a moderate amount of respect, "because he shut his eyes when he touched the cards and shivered at the nine of spades." "I made that monster tremble," she said.¹ In the Rue Fromenteau she had a redoubtable rival

in Etteila—whose real name was Aliette—a famous teller of fortunes both by palmistry and the cards. Her garret was never empty ; and in 1790 she published her “Theoretical and Practical Course on the Book of Thoth, with a View to the True Understanding of the Art, Science, and Wisdom of uttering Oracles,” a work of which many editions appeared, and which was read by every type of person.¹ Students of public opinion called attention, in the winter of the year II, to an old woman who, in default of any other God, addressed her prayers to a portrait of Chaumette, set up between two candles : and Pétion had his devout disciples, who thought him superior to Our Lord Jesus Christ.² On the very day that the desecrated reliquary of St. Geneviève was set down before the table of the President of the Commune, the Section of the Quinze-Vingts proposed to erect, in the disused church of the Abbey of St. Martin, “an altar before which pious vestals should maintain a perpetual light.”³ On all hands, as has been said, the masses, weighed down with the horror of the empty sky, decreed empty by law, “raised their eyes in their distress, trying to catch a glimpse of some corner of the heavens.”

For several years there had been a growing reaction against the aridity of the philosophical theories. The old beliefs had been renounced, but the empty space they left was terrifying, and every effort was made to replace them. Thus, after the war with America, the teaching of the Quakers attracted a fairly large number of disciples. Brissot came back a Quaker from his voyage to the United States, and early in 1791 a delegation of that sect appeared in the National Assembly, to beg that French Quakers might be officially authorised to practise their religion in accordance with their principles—to keep their hats on their heads on all occasions, and to be dispensed from bearing arms.⁴ Others were inclined to mesmerism :

Bergasse, a man of distinguished and acute intellect, was acquainted with a servant-girl "who could divine both the disease and its remedy at the same time." There were many believers in prophecy : Dom Gerle —formerly a Carthusian Father and a famous preacher, ex-Prior of the Abbaye du Val-Dieu and of the Abbaye de Port-Sainte-Marie, and a deputy of the clergy in the States-General—became the devout and submissive disciple of a prophetess called Suzette Labrousse, whose astonishing merits he lauded from the tribune of the Constituent Assembly,¹ and who, dressed as a beggar, set out for Rome to "convert the Pope."² In this spring of the year II the *unknown philosopher*, Saint-Martin, was walking tranquilly about Paris, indifferent to passing events and safeguarded by a nameless protector. Though the meaning of his writings cannot be fathomed by the profane, and though he asserts in them that he "changed his skin seven times while a baby in arms,"³ and though he firmly believed that "the divine wisdom employs agents to make known His Word in our inner selves," his books are adorned with "points so luminous, with remarks so profound, producing the effect of pearls on a sombre and obscure background,"⁴ that they gained him a great number of enthusiastic followers. He was an admirer of Rousseau, being deeply influenced by *Emile* and the *Contrat Social*; and among his disciples he numbered all the women in whom he recognised special qualifications for communicating with spirits in the astral regions.⁵ He lived at Petit-Bourg, under the roof of the Duchesse de Bourbon, whose oracle he was, and who gathered there all the somnambulists and sorcerers that were available, and all who required funds for their search after the philosopher's stone. It was in the house of Her Mystical Highness that Saint-Martin formulated for the first time his "sacred ternary": *Liberty, Equality,*

Fraternity, which was to become the motto of the Revolution and was received with rapture by all the fair idlers, the princesses, duchesses, and *marquises* to whom it was to be fatal. Among these misguided ladies was the Marquise de Lacroix, whose theurgical aptitude was very notable, and was developed "to the point of producing in her, fairly constantly, a state half-way between vision and ecstasy"; she had "visible manifestations," and entered at will into sustained conversation with "the spiritual powers." Now this Marquise de Lacroix was numbered, in 1792, among the "devotees of Robespierre," and carried her fanaticism so far as to withdraw her subscription, in a letter of the greatest acerbity, from a journal that had criticised the policy of the *Incorrputible*.¹ There are signs of Swedenborg's influence in the doctrine of Saint-Martin: and certainly the latter was intimately associated in Strasbourg with Silfert-hielm, nephew of the famous Swedish theosophist who "saw angels, spoke with them, and calmly described their dwellings, their writing, their habits," and viewed with his eyes "the marvels of Heaven and Hell."²

It was not only the posers and triflers of the fashionable world who were led away by these attractive novelties; they entranced the *bourgeoisie* and the people as well. There was much talk in Paris of a certain *Père Raphaël*, a mysterious personage who successfully avoided capture; and the *Prophet Elijah* roamed freely about the streets³ until the day when Sénar placed a hand upon his collar and found on his person a note-book full of *recipes*, among which was a "way to make oneself invisible while killing one of the members of the Convention."⁴ Even the immediate circle of the sceptic Vadier was not free from the ravages of mysticism. Amar, the savage Amar, the enigmatical tyrant of the Committee of General Security, was a follower of Swedenborg, while

Voulland his colleague, who was by his official position associated with the severest measures against Catholic priests, devoutly practised their religious ceremonies, and—if we may believe a contemporary—frequented the cellars and lumber-rooms of Paris in order to take part personally in the clandestine worship of the non-jurors.¹ And Héron's own secretary, Pillé, a poor, timid creature—deaf and addle-pated—whom the chief employed to copy his reports, declared himself convinced that every man is placed at the time of his birth under the care of a demon more or less influential and clever, but always present: he could see these infernal beings and compute their respective merits and failings, and was not in the least afraid of them; for his own “guardian-devil” warned him to keep clear of those whose bad angel was endowed with greater power than himself. . . . Such was the religion of Pillé. His associates called him an imbecile, and were unsparing in their jokes at his expense.²

Of all these aberrations that of “old Mamma Théot” was the most singular: chance had served Vadier well in revealing to him the existence of this poor crazy soul. Since his object was to prove a comical similarity between Robespierre's religious programme and the extravagant notions of the visionary, he was not displeased to find that the latter was an uneducated old slattern: the samples he had already seen of the style of the prophetess were likely, when inserted in an officially-worded report, to produce by force of contrast a very satisfactory effect.

Catherine Théot was absolutely illiterate. She was born on the 5th May, 1716, at Barenton in the diocese of Avranches,³ and, her father being a labourer over-burdened with offspring,⁴ she went to Paris as soon as she was old enough to go to service. She was earnest, and very pious⁵; she attended Mass every day. “For a long time,” she dictated, “I desired to

enter a convent permanently, because I thought it was only in a convent that one could be saved ; but God made me understand that it was not so; I travelled seventy leagues to enter a convent in my own country, where my virtues were known to the Mother Superior and to one of the ladies of the choir. When the moment came that they said to me : ' Go in, the door will be opened to you now,' I did not wish to go in without asking advice from my God. He revealed to me that it was not in a convent that He wished me to be, and that I was to return to the place whence I came, into the highest circles in Paris, and that I should be the whole joy of Israel . . . and that I should deliver His people from the snares of Satan."

So the unhappy creature, with a mind already unbalanced, returned to Paris, not to frequent "the highest circles," but to become the maid-servant, first of a dealer in crockery, and then of a certain Sieur Abbot, a plumber in that town.¹ Next we find her engaged in housework at the Convent of the Miramionnes, where boarders were received, and it was then that she began her divagations. "God inspired me to go to the *White Rose* on the Pont Notre-Dame, to a shop where I should find instruments of penitence. They opened a cupboard for me, which was full of them. . . . God inspired me to take some hair-cloth and the iron belt with its 'pricks' to wear round my waist. Some time afterwards He inspired me to take the bracelet and garters of iron, 'with the pricks' . . . and to wear a nightgown and shift of haircloth. . . . I had made myself so accustomed to all these instruments of penitence that I wore them in bed. . . . I had work that I could not do during the day ; I had to spend part of the nights at it, and I had not time to eat my meals sitting down, and, during eighteen years, I never missed the five o'clock mass, winter or summer, except on Good Friday."² She also procured

"the iron cross with its pricks," six inches long, "and lay upon it in her bed, prostrating herself on the ground several times a day." It is a less edifying fact that about this time she engaged in discussion with her confessor the Abbé Grisel, who, being struck by her eccentricities, remonstrated with her severely. She then chose as her spiritual director the Abbé Davisa, assistant-priest at Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, to whom she endeavoured to prove that our Lord was not dead. The Abbé Davisa denied her the Holy Communion; but "God made it known to Catherine that she no longer had need of sacraments, and that He would guide her Himself."¹

She next began to give instruction; a few of her cronies in the neighbourhood gathered round her of an evening and listened to her prophesying. The Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur Christophe de Beaumont, who was very well posted in the news of his diocese, was disturbed by this budding schism. He wrote to Catherine, begging her to share with him the enlightenment that God gave her. The answer he received and the information he obtained from other quarters reassured him completely, with regard, at least, to any danger of the mischief spreading; the visionary was mad, though not without a virtuous side, for "she deprived herself, miserably poor as she was, of necessary food, in favour of those who were still poorer," and spent her whole life in prayer, work, and mortifications.² But this incident put the finishing touch on Catherine's mental disorder. A letter from her Archbishop! God was actually making use of her to enlighten a dignitary of the Church! Whereupon she began running hither and thither to religious services, interrupting sermons, lying in wait for preachers as they left the pulpit, calling them heretics, and dictating episcopal charges, which she despatched to the *curés* of Saint-Hippolyte, Sainte-Marguerite, and

Saint-Martin, to the Dean of Saint-Marcel, and the *curé* of Saint-Gervais. This last, being less patient than his fellow-clergy, took the admonition badly, lodged a complaint, and obtained a *lettre de cachet* against the tiresome fanatic. Catherine Théot was arrested and sent to the Bastille. With her went the members of her "sect"—a carpenter, a beggar-woman, a seller of lottery tickets, and a professional letter-writer called Hastain, whom she employed to copy her "charges."¹ After six months in that prison she was transferred to La Force, and then to the Salpêtrière, where she was kept for more than three years.²

It was after this that the woman Godefroid, a humble sempstress living by her work, received the "martyr" and took up the position of her servant; their life together was undisturbed except by the divine visits paid to the elect of God. Catherine now called herself "the mother of the Word," and had begun to read the future, declaring that she was assured she would not die, and conferring the same coveted privilege on her followers. The two women lived in this way for ten years, wrapped in their enchanted dream: the hurricane of revolution, the downfall of monarchy, the reign of the scaffold, the war, the subversion of the world—none of these things upset their placidity. With their eyes fixed on heaven they were scarcely aware of the events taking place upon earth. It has always been so; amid the tumult and immensity of Paris, amid all its passionate emotions and agitations, millions and millions of secret lives have in all ages developed in silence and obscurity, giving no sign of their strange activities. Suspicious as Chaumette's police were apt to be, it was only when they received an anonymous denunciation that they disturbed, in January, 1793, the retreat of the prophetess and her companion. After a short exam-

ination, as we have already said, they were set at liberty.

Héron, then, having started his agents upon a search for "the spinster Théot," learnt that the latter was no longer living in the Rue des Rosiers. The widow Godefroid, under whose roof she had found shelter, had settled on Mount Sainte-Geneviève in the Rue Contrescarpe, not far from the Panthéon. The spy Jaton reported, after a scouting expedition, that the two women occupied some little rooms there, in which Catherine received the disciples, whose numbers were increasing every day.¹ Several denunciations regarding these suspicious gatherings—one of which was sent by a person living in the house—had already reached the Committee of the *Section de l'Observatoire*, who had paid no attention to them.² Strange scenes were enacted, said the inhabitants of the district, at these meetings; and no one entered the rooms of the widow Godefroid except the coterie who formed the court of "the Mother of God," or catechumens desiring to be initiated. Jaton succeeded in penetrating to the sanctuary, and described to Héron the method of gaining admission.³

On Friday the 6th May, therefore, Héron made his way at an early hour in the direction of the Panthéon. His portable arsenal was hidden under a long overcoat; he was accompanied by the faithful but timid Pillé. On reaching the Rue Contrescarpe they recognised the house that had been described to them: a very high building of six storeys, close to the corner of the Rue Sainte-Geneviève, near the little Place de Fourcy. Leaving Pillé on guard in the street, Héron entered the house, mounted the stairs, and rang at one of the two doors that faced each other on the landing of the third floor. An aged woman opened the door. Héron, with eyes cast down, asked

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demurely for "Citoyenne Godefroid"; then, as the woman hesitated to let him pass, sighed that he was "a brother seeking light." "Come in, brother," answered the woman, and Héron entered a room lit by two windows overlooking the street. He was in the home of "the Mother of God."

No account of his visit exists. Perhaps he was afraid of compromising his dignity by telling the story of the very ridiculous mummery to which he had to lend himself, to sustain his rôle as a catechumen. In any case his "initiation" was postponed till the morrow. He promised to be punctual, and to bring another proselyte, one of his friends who desired, like himself, to make profession of the faith. He passed the day in making his preparations, and on the Saturday left the Committee of General Security at half-past seven, and set out again to the Rue Contrescarpe, accompanied by Sénar. The stalwarts of his gang were to remain discreetly within easy reach of the house and to warn the commandant of the armed force of the section, who would lend his aid in case of need. One patrol was posted in a neighbouring alley and another at the end of the Rue Contrescarpe, before the house of the *ci-devant* Brothers of the Christian Doctrine. It was eight o'clock in the morning when Héron again climbed the stairs leading to Mother Catherine's paradise. Sénar, who followed him with a rather sheepish expression on his face, was to act the part of the expected proselyte. Héron enjoined upon him to assume "a devout air" and to describe himself as "coming from the country."

As on the previous day, the aged servant opened the door. She recognised Héron. "I have brought a brother to be received," said he. This time they were both admitted without hesitation, the intermediary informing them that "the Mother had not yet risen,"¹ and begging them to wait a little time.

They were in “a kind of anteroom,” into which, almost immediately, there came a man dressed in a white riding-coat, who had the air of being at home. He traced on his forehead a sign of recognition, which Héron copied with great exactitude, and the two passed on into the next room, leaving Sénar shivering and shaking in the narrow entry. Héron soon returned with a woman, who addressed Sénar thus :

“Come, mortal man, to immortality ; the *Mère de Dieu* permits you to enter.”

In the room into which she led him another woman was arranging the stage for his “reception.” Although it was broad daylight she lit a chandelier with three branches, placed “on three little steps three arm-chairs : one white, one blue-and-white, and one red,”¹ and laid a book on one of them. She said : “Time is going on ; the *Mère de Dieu* will soon appear to receive her children.” At that moment a soldier came into the room, accompanied by a woman ; then came yet another woman, whom they called the *Enlightener* ; this was the Citoyenne Godefroid. Sénar watched these preparations, repressing a strong desire to laugh, but affecting an air of pensive admiration.²

The *Enlightener* rang a bell. The curtains covering an alcove were drawn apart, and Catherine Théot appeared—tall, lean, almost transparent. Her head and hands, which were thin in the extreme, were constantly moving in a senile tremor ; she came forward, supported under her arms by two attendants, one of whom was recognised by Sénar as the servant who had opened the door. The other, who was handsome and fair, and was called the *Songstress*, announced : “Brothers, here is your Mother.” They helped Catherine to seat herself in the blue-and-white arm-chair, then knelt before her, kissed her slipper, and rose to their feet, saying : “Glory to the Mother of God !” They brought a jug of water, and the

prophetess, having washed her hands, dried them with a very white piece of linen,¹ which the Enlightener took from her and passed over her forehead, her eyes, and her ears. This summary toilet completed, she was served with a cup of *café-au-lait* and some pieces of thin bread-and-butter on a tray,² and while the Mother ate her breakfast a number of her disciples grouped themselves about her: men and women of all conditions entered, bowed, and took their places on "seats resembling *chaises longues*."³ Héron and Sénar watched the ceremony devoutly. After her meal, which was short, the face and lips of the Mother were again wiped with the cloth; and then at last she uttered these words: "Children of God, your Mother is in the midst of you; I am about to purify the two who are uninitiated."

The moment had come for Sénar to take part in the drama. The Enlightener approached him, relieved him of his hat, and asked him "if he desired the light." He answered in the affirmative. "Can you read?"—"A little." Taking his hand, she led him to Catherine, before whom he fell on his knees. "I have to admit you, my son," said the old woman; "clasp your hands." He obeyed, while the Enlightener breathed in his ear: "You are about to receive the seven gifts of God." She passed behind him, and seizing his head, held it firmly. Sénar, feeling rather uneasy, waited with his eyes half closed, and suddenly felt the lips of the Mother pressed on his forehead, on his eyelids, behind his right ear, on his left cheek, and twice on his chin; then the trembling hands traced a cross upon his forehead. . . . "Now it is your turn," said the Enlightener. Sénar made an effort, and returned Catherine's kisses as she lent towards him; but he shirked the kiss behind the ear. The pitiless assistant went on: "Son and Mother, kiss one another upon the mouth." Sénar submitted heroically

to this last trial,¹ and the Mother, signing to him to rise, ended : " My son, you are received."

He returned to his seat, and one by one Héron and the faithful came and knelt before the prophetess to receive the signs. To each of them Catherine presented the two spies. " Here are a brother of to-day and a brother of yesterday." They all performed the rites with immense fervour, and indeed one young woman of the company experienced a sort of ecstasy ; she repeated the kisses several times, and remained with her mouth on Catherine's for some minutes, while she enthusiastically murmured again and again : " Oh how happy I am ! Alas !" she added, " without our Mother we should all be lost. . . . Owing to her labours and her prayers God will not judge our brothers, and we shall be saved ! "

At that moment the sound of a platoon of cavalry in the street drew all the women to the windows. They watched the soldiers passing. " Perhaps," said one of them, " those men are going to mount guard at the national shambles." A silence fell upon the room : this allusion to the guillotine froze the mystical exaltation of the most fervent. All thoughts were turned to the victims who in that hour, as on every day of that terrible summer of the year II, were suffering the tortures of their dreadful death ; and to the horrible anguish of the slow journey in the tumbril from the prison to the scaffold. Héron heard a young girl expressing the thought of them all as she sighed, with a shiver : " If I had ever to go, I should like to be the first to *go up*." He records these words in his report as though the incident were of no significance ; yet in it lies the explanation, and indeed the justification of the burlesque scene he had just witnessed. When more than eight thousand unhappy men and women, destined for the scaffold, crowded the prisons ; when a domiciliary visit might sweep

off all the inhabitants of a house on account of a fleur-de-lys engraved on the hand of a clock or a crown stamped on the cover of a book ; when a man trembled at the sound of wheels rumbling in the street, or at the blow of the knocker on the door, or at an unfamiliar step on the stairs ; when no one dared to go to bed, nor to go out, nor to speak, nor open a newspaper for fear of reading under the heading " Revolutionary Tribunal " the name of some friend or relative seen but yesterday, and captured, tried, condemned, and slaughtered in twenty-four hours—" a torture like Hell," said a contemporary, " which one must have experienced to understand "—when they could no longer bear this wearing nightmare the poor souls that the Terror drove to madness and deprived of the support of prayer ran to the visionary of the Rue Contrescarpe. She, at all events, foretold " that they would be preserved " ; she spoke to them of happiness and peace, of perpetual youth, of immortality. Not to die ! How restful and delicious a chimera it was in all this horror, when men and women everywhere were hustling one another on the road to death ! To these deluded minds Mother Catherine's garret appeared like the finest of cathedrals, and the mummery in which they forced themselves to take part gave them a glimpse of the blue sky.

As he sat on his chair, with hands clasped and face demure, Sénar was observing each new arrival out of the corner of his eye. He noticed a magnificent brunette, young and blooming, who remained near the Mother and seemed to belong to the house ; she was called the *Dove*. Neither did Héron miss anything that was occurring round him ; he observed that the man in the white riding-coat, after looking at him attentively, approached the sibyl, whispered in her ear, and left the room. A woman began discoursing to Sénar on the seven seals of the Scriptures ; she

explained how, thanks to the power of the Mother, five of these seals were already broken ; the sixth was in course of being removed, and the seventh in its turn would be broken before long. Then, "in a single flash of lightning," the world would be renewed, "the earth would become quite bare, with no mountains," and none would be left alive but the elect of the Mother of God. Every one of these would return to his own home and would live for ever, perfectly free from care. Sénar murmured : "How happy I am! . . . But," he went on, "by what sign shall we be recognised ?" The Enlightener answered : "We shall have one when the great event takes place ; for the moment be content with the sign that has been put upon you. Listen to what I read, and have confidence." She opened an "Office of the Church" and read the gospel for the evening of Christmas Day ; then she embarked upon a dissertation to prove that the Mother then present in the room was the true Virgin. "She sees God ; she talks with Him ; they have been acquainted for twenty-five years. . . ." Sénar, who was not listening and preferred to acquire information, asked what spot was appointed for the rallying-point "at the time of the great affair of the seventh seal." "Near here," answered the Enlightener ; "the place is being built and arranged. . . ." She then graciously informed the two new brethren that "the ministers of the serpent would be destroyed and that the Mother would govern the world ; it would then be understood what was meant by the saying, "Let the dead bury their dead." The inspired lecturer continued without a pause, but Sénar succeeded in interrupting her, being curious to know "if the great event would be long delayed" ; and he learnt that it would soon take place—"sooner than people think." One of the sisters having expressed a desire to hear a sacred song the pretty brunette

consented to sing, “on condition that the Mother would pay her with a kiss,” a request that was granted at once. She intoned a sort of hymn, which the others caught up and sang all together :

*Tous élus, tous amis, tous frères,
Choisis par la Mère de Dieu,
Restons amis constants, sincères,
En tous pays comme en tout lieu. . . .*

As the last lines were sung, the brother in the white riding-coat returned to the room, bringing with him one of the faithful, who wore a grey overcoat and a peruke with a *queue*. This person approached Catherine, received the kisses, and seated himself near her in one of the arm-chairs which had remained empty until now. On his entrance the elect had bowed their heads, which they only raised when he was seated. He ran his eyes over the gathering, and his glance rested with special attention on Héron and Sénar. He took Catherine Théot’s thin hand in his, and spoke to her for some time in a low voice, without removing his eyes from the faces of the intruders, whose presence and behaviour seemed to preoccupy him. He asked them their names, their occupations, and their addresses, and when they had unhesitatingly answered these questions, for which they were prepared, he begged them to repeat their statements in writing before leaving the house. Sénar, in his turn, asked him some questions : “ You are no doubt one of our brothers ? ” “ Yes,” answered the man in the grey coat ; “ it is time for our sorrows to cease. . . . God has hidden Himself, but He has humbled Himself in regard to our Mother by placing Himself within her. It is she, the Mother and Daughter of God, who must govern the universe ; we shall all be rejuvenated after the resurrection.” He was about to proceed when a new-comer appeared on the threshold. Héron, who

was on the alert, turned his eyes in that direction and recognised Jaton, one of his own men, whom he had posted in the street with orders to warn him if anything should occur. Jaton, it may be remembered, was the first among the agents of the Committee of Security to seek out the *Mère de Dieu* and to be initiated into her mysteries. He advanced to the middle of the circle, bent down before the old woman, received from her, as one accustomed to it, the seven kisses, and begged her permission to introduce a convert. Catherine bowed her head in assent, and all the brothers and sisters whom she consulted also acquiesced. Only the man with the peruke showed signs of uneasiness, and was far from eager in his reception of the new recruit. The proselyte, who was no other than Martin, another of Héron's agents, remained discreetly near the door, waiting for his fate to be decided. While pleading his cause he asked his opponent if he were the president of the society. A sort of discussion followed. "There is no president here," replied the other, who appeared agitated by the incident, "we are all equals in the eyes of the *Mère de Dieu*"—and the thin voice of the latter added : "He is one of my sons, chosen in the name of God." Then, to relieve the general embarrassment, she begged the Dove to sing another hymn, which she was perfectly ready to do, demanding only a glass of wine and a biscuit "to renew her energies." This caused a delay of which the faithful took advantage to exchange their impressions, while Jaton approached Héron and said to him in a low voice : "I came up to warn you that the man dressed in grey is Dom Gerle."

It was indeed Dom Gerle, the mystical unfrocked Carthusian who had formerly been a member of the Constituent Assembly as well as the impresario of the prophetess Suzanne Labrousse. For several years his misguided faith had been attaching itself to every sort

of superstition, to all the theosophists and gnostics—whether visionaries or mere charlatans—with whom Paris was teeming. He had constantly visited the Duchesse de Bourbon, who was a collector of all kinds of *illuminati*; and hence, no doubt, arose his relations with Catherine Théot, whose high-priest he had become. The presence of this monomaniac in the dwelling of the New Eve was a godsend to the agents of the Committee of Security, and would surely provide Vadier with an excuse for giving his projected report a political significance. The Songstress, meanwhile, fortified by her glass of wine, was singing at the top of her voice :

*Vérité, montre-toi ; viens changer notre sort,
Viens pour anéantir l'empire de la mort.*

At that moment the door was roughly flung open, and a woman whom the adepts knew to be a faithful sister burst in like a hurricane. They all crowded round her while she breathlessly announced that the whole district was in an uproar; in the neighbouring wine-shops armed men were drinking to the health of *La Mère de Dieu*; there were groups of soldiers close at hand; she had even seen an evil-looking man keeping watch in the door-keeper's room. "We are betrayed!" cried Dom Gerle. General agitation followed; the sisters hustled one another towards the door; some of them rushed at Sénar; the Enlightener made every effort to calm her companions. "Do not let us kill anyone; let us have an explanation!" Gerle tried to slip away under cover of the confusion, but Héron barred the way, and the ex-Carthusian, recognising that fighting was useless, returned to his seat beside *La Mère de Dieu*, who was looking on, half-dazed, at the turmoil. Indeed, when the first alarm was over, he put a good face upon the matter. "My sisters," he cried, imposing silence on the distracted

devotees, " traitors have found their way into our midst ; it is a good opportunity to show our principles ; and after all, it was bound to happen sooner or later."

The scene that followed was not without an element of greatness. These poor women whom the fear of death had brought to this place where immortality was promised them, when the hour of martyrdom arrived went bravely to the sacrifice. Perhaps their faith in the Mother's promises was so strong that even now, when face to face with the press-gang of the scaffold, they believed themselves invulnerable, and as they gathered close about their idol imbibed a sort of heroism from their contact with her. Gerle, owing to his imposing presence, dominated the whole party, anathematising their betrayers and defying their persecutors. The four spies of the Committee—Héron, Sénar, Martin, and Jaton—tried to restrain his apocalyptic delirium, and at last Sénar opened the window and shouted out a summons to his men. In a moment the street, the passage of the house, and the stairs were swarming with soldiers and police ; and the door, which one of the sisters had locked in her terror, was broken open with the butt-ends of their muskets by Héron's troops, who poured into the narrow precincts of the *Mère de Dieu*.

The official inquiry was instantly begun. Not one of Catherine's disciples denied the faith ; they offered themselves as a holocaust for this ridiculous cause with all the serenity and courage of the first Christians confessing the true God. Héron and Sénar learnt many a thing that would be of the greatest value to Vadier. Catherine Théot, who was the first to be questioned, declared " that she heard God when He spoke, but without seeing Him. . . . It was she that was obeyed by the armies . . . she was the Mother of all nations, who called her blessed " . . . many citizens and soldiers came to her, " especially

those who were going to fight" ; there was one who even came " from Lyons, a hundred leagues away, and hunted for her all over Paris" ; he would not have joined his regiment without seeing her . . . for those who received the signs were sure of not being wounded and would enjoy immortality of the soul and of the body." She referred, among others, to a man called Péchelache, an officer of a certain rank at that moment with the army somewhere near Dunkirk.¹

The widow Godefroid admitted that she had known and had lived with the Mother for more than fifteen years, " and believed profoundly in all her inspirations from God" ; the girl Mamie, a worker in the linen trade, asserted that " more than three quarters of the inhabitants of Paris were Catherine's disciples" ; the pretty girl whom they called the Dove deposed that her name was Rose Raffet,² and that she visited *La Mère de Dieu* as often as she could, and also brought her sister, with whom she lived in the Rue Saint-Dominique d'Enfer.³ The man in the white riding-coat was Citizen Paul Servat, who had a private income, lived on the same floor as Catherine, and visited her every evening. He was certain he would not die. The same confession of faith was made by Madame Servat, his wife. A woman of independent means, living at Tournan-en-Brie, who had been visiting Catherine for the past ten days, did not deny that she had made converts in her own neighbourhood. The next witness was the Breton woman who was the Mother's servant ; it was she who opened the door and did the work of the house ; she knew, beyond all possibility of doubt, that her mistress was the Mother of God. The old man who was questioned after her wore an air of great embarrassment ; he, too, lived in the house, on the sixth floor ; he was called Chateaumont, and was a secretary to the Committee of Public Safety. He knew Gerle very well, but he knew nothing

of the doings in Catherine's rooms ; he only knew that a great number of people visited her ; he constantly met them on the stairs when he was going up on his way home from his office. The next was Citoyenne Girault, who had quite lately been initiated, because one of her friends advised her "to lose no time, for the time of universal happiness was drawing near" ; "there would be no more war, and kings would lay down their crowns," and this was to take place very soon, near the Panthéon, at a spot that was being prepared for the occasion. Gerle himself showed the same confidence. "He recognised," he said, "in the Scriptures, the truth of Catherine's pronouncements ; he had been visiting her during the last two years and knew Pécheloche well, who was the principal tenant in the house where the Mother lived."

The brief examinations being at an end Héron informed the accused that, by order of the Committee of General Security, they were placed under arrest as "instigators of suspicious meetings." He proceeded to affix the seals, and while he was preparing his wax, signet, and strips of canvas, a man appeared on the threshold and was propelled into the room by a sergeant of the National Guard and a certain Lesueur, an agent of the Committee, who had been keeping watch on the stairs. The man was greatly bewildered. As he came up the stairs he had gaily asked Lesueur : "Brother, are you a member of the society ?" "Yes, brother," answered the spy. "Good," replied the other, "I am a member, too ; I have been here before ; I know all the songs they sing ; I have come to fetch my wife, who is with *La Mère de Dieu* ; we have known her for two months past ; she often comes to meals with us. . . ." Upon this, Lesueur seized him. He was a stationer named Ducrest, from the Rue Phélieppaux. He tried his best to recall his imprudent words, but it was too late ; he was involved

with the others, and in the evening—for the inquiry had lasted for the whole day—the inhabitants of the Quartier de l'Estrapade watched the departure of a singular procession. *La Mère de Dieu*, with shaking head, was walking with short steps in a circle of police ; the company of the faithful followed her between two lines of national guards ; Héron and Sénar were conducting the march, escorted by their staff of agents. By way of the Rue Saint-Jacques they reached the old College of Du Plessis, which, together with the buildings that had once been the College of Louis-le-Grand, had just been turned into a huge prison. The workmen were still busy there. In this building the Seer and her initiates were imprisoned ; and thus was already fulfilled one of Mother Catherine's prophecies—that a great change would take place in her life *in a school near the Panthéon.*

Upon this theme Vadier made ready to embroider. There was nothing in it that had the least connection with Robespierre ; but that was of little importance. No doubt it would have been better if he could have mentioned him as one of Mother Catherine's devotees, and had surprised him on his knees piously kissing the eyes and chin of the old sibyl ; but there was nothing to prevent him from insinuating that *La Mère de Dieu* regarded Robespierre as her beloved son, and that he was to take part in the great ceremony of removing the seventh seal. Moreover, it would answer his purpose if he could raise a laugh by drawing a burlesque picture in rivalry of the pompous homily delivered by the apostle of the Supreme Being. The New Eve of the Rue Contrescarpe and at least twenty of her flock would doubtless lose their heads in consequence of his foolery ; but since immortality had been conferred on them, that inconvenience was a mere trifle, and Vadier did not hesitate on account of such a

detail. He wished to avenge Voltaire, whom the Incorruptible had soundly rated in his recent discourse ; and to enable the free-thinkers, the followers of the author of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, to hold their own against the ranks of the fervent admirers of Rousseau, whose disciple and apostle Robespierre professed to be.

Some have thought to discover in the secret warfare that was waged from this time forward between the Committee of Public Safety, ruled by Robespierre, and the Committee of General Security, represented by Vadier, a belated aftermath of the old antagonism that had once existed between Voltaire and Rousseau. The two great agents of destruction stood face to face again in the persons of their partisans, who were bent on putting their theories in practice. But the struggle of the Committees cannot bear this wide interpretation. Voltaire the aristocrat would have been very little flattered by such a deputy as Vadier, who, judging from his uncontrolled eloquence, was a hair-splitter of indifferent taste. As for the easily-affronted Rousseau, if he had been unfortunate enough to live till the time of the Terror it is very probable that Robespierre would not have woven so many wreaths for him ; two men of such unaccommodating characters were not likely to agree ; one of them was bound to be dead before the other could revere him.

From certain lines that were addressed by Robespierre to the shade of Jean-Jacques—"I saw thee during thy last days, I gazed on thine august features . . ."—¹ it has been concluded that he visited the author of the *Contrat Social* in his retreat at Ermenonville ; it has been fancied that the philosopher chose this unknown young man to be the inheritor of his doctrines, and bequeathed to him the mission of applying them. This romantic episode is very probably the creation of adventurous commentators ; if

Robespierre had ever been granted the unusual favour of an interview with the misanthropical Genevan he would not have failed to make the most of it nor to record the smallest word used by his idol when marking out the road he was to follow. What we may believe is that he travelled to Ermenonville, that he saw Jean-Jacques taking his solitary walk, and that he did not risk any attempt at conversation, in the fear of being roughly snubbed. This precious experience may have occurred in the spring of 1778, when, since his studies were nearly ended and his name perhaps was already entered at the School of Law, he could easily escape from the discipline of the college. Such pilgrimages were a fashion of the day, and many another enthusiast had dreams of gaining access to the great man ; but there is no record of any of them being happy enough to succeed. Carnot and one of his friends engaged upon the adventure and were received with a rebuff ; Manon Flipon, the future Madame Roland, in spite of her attractions and her twenty-two years, had the door shut in her face.¹

However fleeting and furtive his glimpse of Rousseau may have been, Robespierre invoked his name, drew inspiration from his writings, frequently quoted him, and even affected to conform his life to that of the morose philosopher. He was a fatal model for a presumptuous young man who suffered from being unappreciated. "When one has read Rousseau," said Joubert, "one believes oneself to be virtuous ; one learns with him to be dissatisfied with everything except oneself." It was from the irreligious piety of the author of *Emile* that Robespierre borrowed the idea of his new religion ; but if, when he made it the subject of a decree, he was following a principle laid down by Jean-Jacques,¹ he was also obeying, perhaps unconsciously, a need in his own soul, on which the stamp of Catholicism was deeply imprinted.

How could it have been otherwise? When quite a child he had lived in contact with priests; his religious education was carefully superintended by two aunts of profound faith and pious lives; there were priests round him again, and eminent priests, too, to form his mind during the years of his college life; on the rare occasions when he left his books he spent the day with the Canons of Notre-Dame, and a Canon of Arras was his host during the vacations. It is recorded that the child, in the course of the two months that he spent every year in his native town, would go out into the country at sundown, to a little chapel on the outskirts of the village of Blairville, and would stay there for a long time wrapped in solitary meditation.¹ And later on, when he was an advocate on the Council of Artois and a judge of the episcopal tribunal, it is quite certain that he faithfully observed all the obligatory practices of religion; any other course of action would have made a scandal in a town that was notably religious. Indeed it has been said, and it is very probable, that until 1789 Robespierre "communicated every week."² When a deputy in the States-General he protested at first against the malicious attempts to throw discredit on the representatives of the Third Estate, by daring to insinuate that they "wished to attack the Catholic religion."³ It is evident that at that time he regarded it as unassailable and sacred. When the war against the faith finally burst out, he opposed the prelates and dignitaries of the Church with great violence; but he always posed as the defender of the "lower clergy." His solicitude was carried so far that, as early as 1790, he was in favour of permitting the priesthood to marry, a premature innovation that he was prevented from bringing forward by the opposition it aroused.⁴ In the Convention he was the last advocate of the catholics and of liberty of worship; and it was owing to him that the stipends

of parish priests and their curates were continued. "To attack the forms of religion," he said, "is to strike at the morality of the people."¹ At the time of the purging of the Jacobins, when all foreigners, nobles, and bankers were swept out, he opposed the expulsion of the priests who were members of the club.² We constantly find him seeking the society of ecclesiastics, another point of resemblance to Rousseau, who wrote: "I have many friends among the French clergy; I have always been on good terms with them."³ There is endless evidence of the presence of priests in Maximilien's environment. During the days of the Constituent Assembly he maintained intimate relations with his colleague and compatriot the Abbé Michaud, *curé* of Boury-en-Artois⁴; at the same period he "was on excellent terms with the Canons of the Chapter of Paris . . . and sometimes he went to dinner with them."⁵ Before the 10th August it was "an abbé, a friend of his," who approached all the conspicuous politicians in his name and begged them to band themselves together.⁶ It will be said that these were renegade and disreputable priests, who were all the more hostile to the orthodox clergy because the latter regarded them as deserters. But it would be unjust to generalise, for a number of the priests who took the oath kept the ardent faith and the virtues of their former state in spite of their error. Moreover, the Incorruptible's protection was extended to others. The saintly Abbé Émery, for instance, the most militant of the non-jurors, who was imprisoned in the Conciergerie during the Terror and there carried on his ministrations in secret, was saved from the scaffold partly through the devotion of Voltaire's niece, Madame de Villette, and the action of an aunt of Fouquier-Tinville, the public prosecutor, but most of all through the mysterious intervention of Robespierre. . . ?⁷

The little that is known of these friendships with priests helps us to understand the surprising scene that took place on the 26th March, 1792, in the Jacobin Club, which we must briefly recall at this point. In the course of an improvised speech on the dangers of the situation Robespierre had invoked the name of " Providence, who always protects us far better than our own wisdom." " Let us be afraid," he added, " of wearing out the goodness of Heaven, which, until now, has insisted on saving us in spite of ourselves." His speech was punctuated with interjections such as *God forbid!* and other exclamations that savoured of " the sacristy," which produced loud yells from the brothers and friends, who were much upset at hearing their hero express himself like " a shaveling." Guadet made himself the mouthpiece of the general stupefaction. " In the course of this discussion," he said, " I have repeatedly heard the word *Providence* used; I should never have thought that a man who for three years had laboured with so much courage to drag the people out of slavery would have tried in this way to burden them again with the chains of superstition. . . . A hubbub of disapproval and applause followed, but Robespierre sprang to the tribune. " For my part I will uphold those eternal principles on which human weakness is borne upwards to the heights of virtue. These are not vain words in my mouth, any more than in the mouths of the many illustrious men who have not been less moral because they believed in the existence of God. . . ." (Agitation, and cries of *Order!*) " No, gentlemen, you will not stifle my voice. . . . I shall continue to enlarge upon one of the principles that are ingrained in my heart. . . . To invoke the name of Providence, to give vent to the idea of an eternal Being Who has an essential influence on the destinies of nations . . . is a necessity to my feelings. . . ." And in this hour that was

perhaps unique in his career, in this hour when—carried away by the impetus of his extempore eloquence—he laid bare the depths of his heart, he revealed that in those depths were still rankling all the resentments and wounds and mortifications of his youth, and the humiliations of his early struggles. “How should I not feel this sentiment a necessity to me—I, who, when I was exposed in the Constituent Assembly to every kind of passion and vile intrigue, stood firm among the many enemies who surrounded me? How should I have been able to endure labours beyond the strength of man, if I had not lifted up my soul? . . . This divine sentiment has well compensated me for all the advantages granted to those who aimed at betraying the people. . . .” The edifying harangue came to an end amid cries and yells from the bewildered audience; for, like the thorough-going Jacobins they were, they already were persuaded that no man could serve the cause of the people without being a confirmed materialist; and to complete Robespierre’s misfortunes it was Gobel, the miserable, spurious bishop, who was in the chair that evening. He had the courage to place his hat on his head, and thereby to close the sitting.¹

Eighteen months later Robespierre was again making a confession of faith from the same tribune; and by a strikingly ironical turn of Fortune’s wheel Anacharsis Clootz was presiding: Clootz the Prussian banker, an extravagant apostle of international atheism. Disgusted by the sacrilegious masquerades connected with the recent inauguration of the worship of Reason—for it was the 1st Frimaire in the year II, the very day on which the reliquary of St. Geneviève was profaned in the Commune—Robespierre on this occasion, shaking with indignation, railed against the renegade priests “who hastened to exchange their posts for those of municipal officers, administrators,

and even chairman of popular societies." "You should be afraid," he said, "not of the coat they wear, but of the new skin they have assumed." He would not permit men hitherto unknown in the Revolution "to harass liberty of worship and attack fanaticism with a new form of fanaticism. . . ." "Priests had been denounced for saying Mass ; they will go on saying it all the longer if they are prevented from saying it. The man who tries to prevent them from saying it is a greater fanatic than the man who says it. . . ." Atheism is aristocratic. . . . "The idea of a great Being who watches over oppressed innocence and pursues triumphant crime is altogether popular. All acts of homage paid to that incomprehensible power, the terror of crime and the support of goodness, are so many anathemas against injustice. . . ."—"I repeat, the only fanaticism we have to fear is that of the immoral men who are subsidised by foreign courts . . . who wish to make us odious in the eyes of all nations in order to steady their tottering thrones."¹

He was never so eloquent as when speaking of the Deity ; never were his words so ardent and his thoughts so clear ; he put from him then all his ambiguity and cunning, all his deceitful reticences and insinuations and deliberate obscurity. These too rare passages, like lightning in the blackness of night, give the illusion of a ray of light shining on that enigmatic and clouded soul. Though the shadows are thicker than ever after this swift gleam, it seems impossible to doubt the sincerity of the religious instinct in a man who spoke thus. No doubt these utterances contain many reminiscences of the *Vicaire Savoyard* ; but they also show profound conviction, for in the records of his daily life we find evidence of the same spirit that appears in these moments of courageous self-expression. In the charming narrative she has left us of her innocent love-story, the youngest daughter of the carpenter

Robespierre's Rise and Fall

Duplay, Élizabeth, tells how she chose her parents' guest to be the confidant of her sorrows. She regarded him as an elder brother, whose kindness and indulgence and delicacy were always ready ; he soothed her by speaking of *le bon Dieu*—Whom he called the Supreme Being. “ How often,” she writes, “ has he scolded me because I seemed not to believe in Him as fervently as he did himself ! He used to say to me : ‘ You are wrong, you will be unhappy. . . . You are still very young, Elizabeth ; do not forget that there is no other consolation on earth.’ ”¹ It is easy to understand how, in the general disruption of all traditions and downfall of all beliefs that surrounded him, this attitude that Robespierre paraded made him the object of much hatred and many jokes. Among the Jacobins he could do as he pleased, though there were bitter lamentations over his “ monkish tirades ” ; but when he made a full statement in the Convention of his views on the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, all the rationalists and materialists in the Assembly, whether their atheism was authentic or assumed, regarded his profession of faith as a declaration of war and a return to “ obscurantism.” They voted as he desired because they were afraid of him ; but they secretly made ready for the battle, and Vadier took command of the attack.

At the Feast of the Supreme Being hostilities began.

III

THE FEAST OF THE SUPREME BEING

THE decree relating to the Supreme Being had not been law for many days when the preparations for the Fête were begun ; and immediately the Parisians, in accordance with their unfailing habits, began to take amusement in watching the progress of the work, which was superintended by Citoyen Hubert, David's brother-in-law, and Inspector-General of National Buildings. The first step was to deposit on the terrace of the Palace of the Tuilleries, in front of the central pavilion, cartloads of rubble, old plaster, and other building materials, while at the same time the carpenters were setting up enormous scaffoldings. In the course of a few days a gigantic double staircase took form, the curving wings of which left free access between them to the grand entrance of the ground floor and reached to the height of the first storey, thus forming a huge platform on a level with the great salon of the palace. Ten builders and at least as many carpenters were employed in building this amphitheatre, upon which, in accordance with the programme drawn up by David, the celebrated painter and conventionist, all the deputies and artists, and the choruses and orchestra of the opera were to be placed.¹ The decoration of the great basin near the palace was a more complicated matter, and roused more curiosity among the lookers-on. The basin was first covered with solid planking that exactly fitted its circular form ; then, in the middle of this floor, was erected a sort of cross

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made of two iron bars, the arrangement of which was altered several times. It was the framework of a colossal statue of Wisdom, which the sculptor Pasquier built up with immense quantities of plaster, tow, and cement—a shoddy sort of Wisdom which was arranged to appear suddenly in the course of the Fête, at the moment when another statue, representing Atheism, fell into dust. Atheism was made of lighter materials than the other figure, and was designed, while awaiting the juggling trick, to hide Wisdom completely under the ample folds of her robes. It seems probable that the affair was not carried through without anxiety and a good many tentative attempts; for, however great the talent of the Citizen Chaudet, who was entrusted with the work, it was a perplexing problem to create an effigy of imposing dimensions out of glazed calico daubed with sulphur, whose attitude and attributes should symbolise Atheism so clearly that no one could mistake its identity. Ruggieri, the expert in fireworks, who helped Chaudet in this delicate task, was the writer of *La Théism*, whence we may suppose that he was not well-informed as to the kind of emblems most suitable for the adornment of this image.¹

It was the Champ de Mars that attracted interested onlookers in the largest numbers, for there a host of workmen were occupied in raising a symbolic mountain: it is well known that the *Mountain*, in the jargon of the Assembly, was the name given to the side of the hall on which Robespierre sat. This was an arduous undertaking, for the mound, lest it should appear insignificant in the midst of the immense space, was to be of considerable size, which was all the more necessary because the whole Convention, as well as the bands—instrumental and vocal—and the standard-bearers of the armed sections, and a number of other persons, were all to be stationed on its summit. Upon

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it, moreover, were to be placed a pillar fifty feet high, a grotto, some steep pathways, an oak-tree nearly a hundred years old, some candelabra holding torches, four Etruscan tombs, and a temple with twenty columns supporting a frieze. The scene-painter Houët undertook this alarming work : he was obliged to create the whole structure in less than a month, except some damaged properties that he took from the ruins of the Altar of the *Patrie*, which had been standing there deserted since the disastrous riot of the 17th July, 1791. Masons, carters, carpenters, bricklayers, sawyers, excavators, and artists of every description were hurriedly mobilised, and at the end of a few days the Mountain was already taking on its imposing and picturesque form. A single item from the contractor's bill will give an idea of the extent of the work : a sum of over 13,000 francs was spent on nails and pegs ! But expense was not considered ; David superintended everything ; and his friend Robespierre, he knew, wished the Fête to be magnificent and to efface by its splendour and novelty the memory of all the pomps and ceremonies of the Monarchy.¹ And already the Incorruptible was winning the gratitude of the Parisians ; already they were filled with admiration, and delighted, above all, with the prodigality that was bringing so much profit to every kind of trade and all the corporations. For the first time since the beginning of the Terror a sort of lull, a feeling of relaxation, was produced by this activity in business. The guillotine, it is true, was equally active, and every day the executioner's carts carried through the streets a large contingent of victims ; but the people had grown so familiar with this horror that it no longer sickened them. After all, why should one be concerned about conspirators, of whom the Republic must of course be rid ?

The history of the Revolution, as it is put before

us by eminent and learned men, experts in the study and criticism of texts, has one great defect : it never shows us the People—that character in the drama to whom reference is made in every scene, but who nearly always remains in the wings, never appearing on the stage except when dragged thither. I do not mean the mass of semi-bourgeois, the shop-keepers and small clerks who went of an evening to the section meetings, sat on the local committees, listened to the reading of the gazettes, and felt competent to form an opinion after hearing the harangues of the Quarter's finest orators : but the artisans, labourers, journeymen, operatives, and working women, whose whole time was occupied by the business of earning their daily bread, and whose only source of information was a sentence passed from door to door—heard in the timber-yard, the workshop, or the wash-house, picked up from porters or tradesmen, or in the queue outside the baker's shop. How can we possibly estimate the quantity of lies, false ideas, extravagant tales, follies, exaggerations, scandals, and idle words that must have circulated among such people, condemned by their incompetence to miss the significance of passing events, yet ready to discuss them with all the dogmatic assurance of perfect ignorance ? How can we picture the mental image that these simple folk formed of Robespierre, whom they had never seen, of whose speeches they would not have understood a word, but whose name was dear to them none the less as that of a Messiah who took an interest in their fate, and loved them, and was trying to make them richer ? They all knew—for the story had spread—that he lived with working-men like themselves, with the noise of planes and saws in his ears, and they pictured him as a very learned man, of course, but thoroughly straightforward, frank of speech, expansive, familiar, open-hearted. His popularity was built on these illusions,

and all his power depended on the credulity of an ever-growing throng of simple minds.

For over a year and eight months he had been living in Duplay's house, to which chance had led him, and which, in virtue of his presence, had become a sort of general headquarters of the Terror. Though the arrangement of the dwelling has changed but little,¹ its outward appearance is very different from its aspect in the year II ; the house, like its neighbours, had at that time only one storey instead of the five that weigh so heavily upon it to-day ; the narrow court-yard that is now so sombre was then full of air and sunshine, thanks to the great gardens of the *ci-devant* Convent of the Conception, into which Duplay had the right of entry through a door of which traces still remain.² Into that court where the Duplay sisters cultivated a little garden—one flower-bed—projected the carpenter's workshop, where all day long the workmen sawed and planed and fitted joints with much banging of mallets under the window of Robespierre's little room, filling it with the homely smell of new wood and fresh shavings.

It was a small room, entered through a tiny antechamber and furnished with a few straw-bottomed chairs, a very unpretentious bureau, and a bed of walnut-wood hung with blue damask curtains, made from one of Madame Duplay's gowns. A row of pigeon-holes fastened on the wall took the place of a bookcase. The stairs leading to this little cell³ came up from the dining-room, which was on the ground floor, at the back of the court ; it could also be reached by the main staircase of the house, a staircase which appeared on the left as soon as the hall door was entered, and which still exists. In going this way it was necessary to pass through two small rooms, of which one was occupied by little Duplay, the schoolboy, and the other by his cousin Simon, who sometimes

acted as secretary to Robespierre. Simon Duplay had enlisted as a volunteer, and being seriously wounded at Valmy had lost one of his legs. He was generally called *Wooden-leg Duplay*.

It was Robespierre's habit to go out early, after drinking his morning coffee at the family breakfast-table. The sitting of the Convention generally opened at ten o'clock in the morning and continued till three or four in the afternoon. The evenings were dedicated to the Jacobins, who rarely took a holiday. The dinner-hour, therefore, was about five o'clock. And an immense change had taken place in the style of living in this house since it had given shelter to the great man. In addition to the usual inmates Madame Duplay had guests at her table nearly every day. The most frequent visitors were Pierre Vaugeois and his brother the carpenter of Choisy : Philippe Le Bas, a young deputy from Artois of comely appearance and honest, enthusiastic heart, who had been a clerk before the Revolution in the office of Bourdon the solicitor, now Deputy Bourdon of the department of the Oise¹ : Buonarotti, a descendant of Michael-Angelo, an Italian who had been naturalised a Frenchman by a solemn decree of the Convention and was much enamoured of liberty, a man who spent his whole life in conspiracy and remained faithful till extreme old age to the worship of Robespierre : Didiée, a locksmith of Choisy and a friend of Vaugeois, and Gravier, who came from Lyons and was a distiller by profession, both of whom lived in the Rue Saint-Honoré in the house next to Duplay's² : an Italian designer called Cietty, who was employed by the manufactory of wall-papers at Montreuil : and David who, because he was a great painter, thought himself also a great politician, and in order to rub shoulders with Robespierre condescended to come down from his pedestal and frequent the carpenter's house. Others who were to be seen there

sometimes were Lohier, a grocer in the Rue Saint-André des Arcs, who supplied the Duplay household with groceries¹; Nicolas, a Lorainer of Mirecourt, a printer, who lodged only a few yards away at No. 355 of the Rue Saint-Honoré; and the *ci-devant* Comtesse de Chalabre, an eccentric person, “grotesque”² in face and figure, who assiduously attended the meetings of the Convention and the Jacobins, and fell into raptures whenever Robespierre spoke. On one occasion, when he left the tribune after a stormy discussion, she was seen to wipe the beads of perspiration from her hero’s forehead³; and to be nearer him she sought shelter in the lodging of the printer Nicolas, and settled there permanently.⁴ Mention must also be made of a certain quack-doctor called Tranche-la-Hausse, who was to be useful on a later occasion⁵; and of Calandini, a cobbler from Arras who was of Corsican origin, and had left Artois with his wife and children in order to be near Robespierre in Paris. To keep guard over him during the night he slept, it is said, in the little passage-room that led to Maximilien’s chamber.⁶

Elizabeth Duplay, with gratified emotion, has described how the evenings were spent in her parents’ house during those happy times of the Terror that she was to regret for the rest of her life. Robespierre would read aloud one of Racine’s or Corneille’s tragedies, or a chapter from the works of Voltaire or Rousseau.⁷ We are told, too, that on certain days when the party was larger than usual, Buonarotti, who was a professional musician, would seat himself at the harpsichord after dinner; and Le Bas would sing a ballad or take up his violin, on which he played agreeably. These artistic delights must have been rare, for it is a problem to find the possibility of a moment’s leisure in Robespierre’s very full life. How did he contrive to fulfil all his obligations? After spending five or six hours of the day at the Convention,

and attending the meeting of the Jacobins, which most frequently was not over till eleven o'clock in the evening, and the sittings of the Committee of Public Safety, which continued all day and sometimes all night, what time was left for his personal work, the reading of his letters and preparation of his speeches? He composed slowly and painfully, as we may see from his rough drafts, of which whole pages are erased.¹ Neither is it clear to us by whom, nor how, he was helped in his work, of which we see only a part, for there are in existence some of his memorandum-books and loose sheets of paper on which appear, in his small, crabbed, spasmodic, and often illegible writing, rapid notes suggesting schemes for administrative or judicial organisation, and mentioning—with a terse list of their qualifications—the names of persons deserving to be employed.² He must have had trusty agents to bring them to his notice, and among those who may have played this part we must not omit to mention Taschereau, whose name—together with a word to show that his visits were frequent—appears in Elizabeth Duplay's list of those who came to her father's house:—"Taschereau often."³

Robespierre took him into his confidence, perhaps as a means of being kept informed of the doings of Collot d'Herbois, his not too trustworthy colleague on the Committee of Public Safety. For Taschereau, with his wife and daughter, lived in the same house as Collot, in the Italian colony in the Rue Favart.⁴ He had formerly been a ship-owner, but his considerable fortune had been swept away by the Revolution. Being full of enthusiasm, and endowed with the eloquence common to men of the south, he came to Paris in 1791 and joined the Jacobins; and thenceforward his career was surprising. Having been sent to Spain as an envoy from the Republic, in 1793, he was badly received at Madrid. The populace handled

him roughly, and having with great difficulty escaped from his hotel by jumping from a window, he returned Paris to in search of occupation. He was enrolled in the little band of those who were known as "Robespierre's satellites," and had the reputation of being one of the Incorruptible's most active spies ; the latter, it is said, used him as an intermediary in communicating with Fouquier-Tinville.¹ But the course of this attachment did not run smooth : either because Robespierre suspected him of treachery, or because he thought it advisable to feign hostility towards this valuable disciple, Taschereau was expelled from the Jacobin Club and imprisoned.² He was restored to favour in the spring of 1794. Vadier feared him, and hated him heartily for some resaon that is still unexplained.

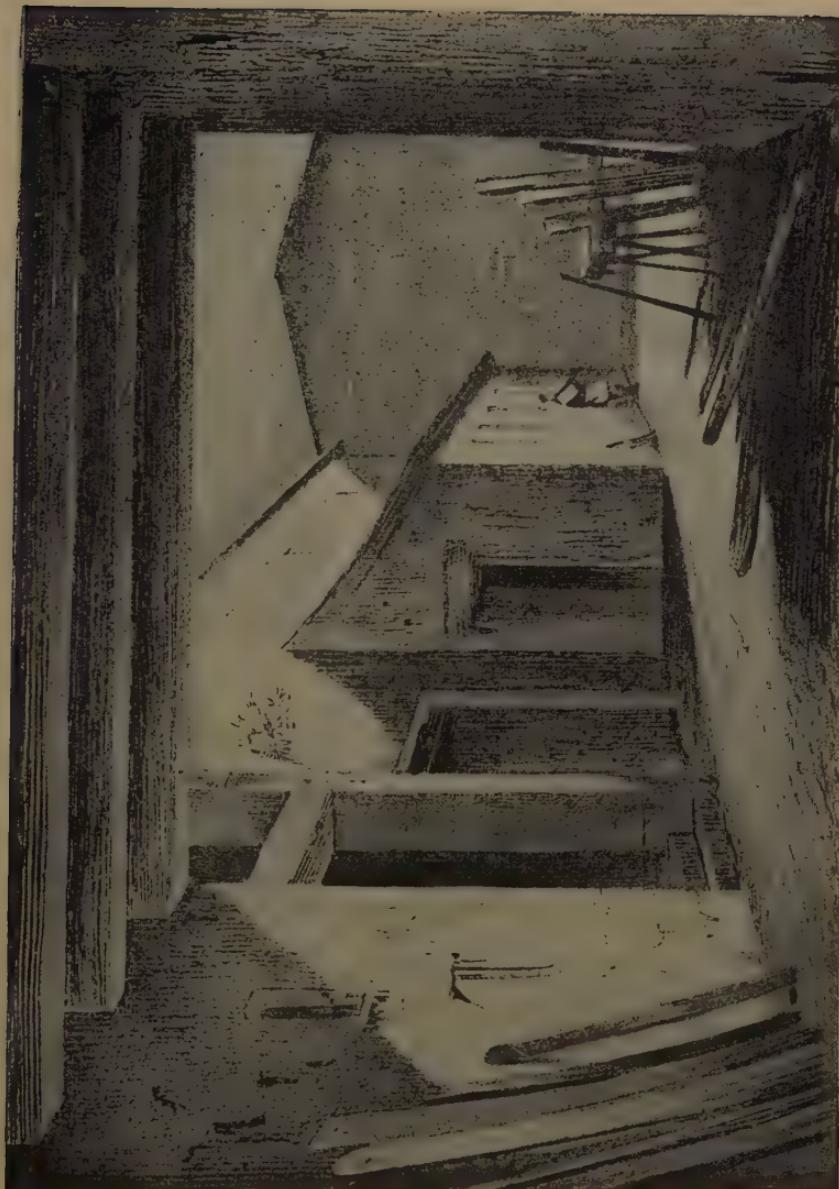
The home of the Duplays, once so calm, was now positively overrun with people. Robespierre the younger, *Bonbon*, who, like his elder brother, was a deputy to the Convention, had joined Maximilien at the carpenter's house, and his sister Charlotte was also installed there. Duplay had given up to him, without a lease, a set of rooms in the main building overlooking the street,³ at a rent of a thousand francs a year. His friend Couthon soon established himself there⁴ with his family. He was not a convenient tenant, for he was unable to walk a step, and when he dined with the Duplays it was necessary to carry him down the stairs and across the court to the dining-room.

In spite of this crowd of guests in her house, and often at her table, there is nothing to show that Madame Duplay enlarged her household : she and her daughters were equal to the work by themselves. Elizabeth even found time to have many a gossip with Charlotte Robespierre, and to curl her hair and show an interest in her toilettes⁵ ; and moreover shared with

her mother or sister Éléonore the task of mounting guard in the courtyard, keeping a careful watch lest any intruder should approach Robespierre. Their vigilance was never relaxed. Many of us have read the story related by Barras of a visit paid to this house that was so closely barred to strangers. On returning from his mission to the south, Barras, accompanied by his colleague Fréron, proceeded to the Rue Saint-Honoré, passed through the porch where planks lay piled in heaps, and reached the little courtyard, which was also encumbered with wood for the workshop. Madame Duplay and one of her daughters were posted there : the girl was hanging up upon a line some striped cotton stockings that she had just washed, which Barras recognised as some of those that Robespierre habitually wore : the mother, with a tub between her legs, was cleaning vegetables. Fréron, who knew the place, went straight to the staircase leading to Robespierre's rooms ; but the two women assured him that the latter was out, and when Fréron insisted on going up they barred his way. The mother said : "Very well, I will go and warn him," and from the foot of the stairs she called out : "It is Fréron and his friend, whose name I don't know!" Mounting the stairs before them, she opened the door of the room ; the two men entered and found Robespierre on his feet with a dressing-gown about him. He was just out of the hands of his hairdresser ; his peruke and his whole face was plastered with a thick coating of white powder. Without returning the greetings of his visitors, without saying a word, without even seeming to be aware of their presence, he turned towards the little looking-glass hanging on the window-frame and with his toilet-knife scraped away the powder with which his forehead and cheeks were covered, then threw his dressing-gown upon a chair, washed himself in a basin that he held in his hand, cleaned his teeth,

COURTYARD OF DUPLAY'S HOUSE.

After an engraving in Nodier and Christian's *Paris Historique*.



and spat repeatedly on the feet of his visitors, without giving them the smallest mark of attention. Fréron was the first to speak, to report the result of their mission. Then Barras spoke in his turn ; but Robespierre did not utter a word in reply, nor by a gesture or a sign give any indication that he did not believe himself to be alone. Neither anger nor disdain showed in his face. “I never saw anything so impassive,” writes Barras, “in a marble statue or on the face of the dead.” He and his companion retreated without obtaining a word or even a glance.¹

The impressions of a certain Stanislas Lacante are also on record. Wishing to secure Robespierre’s support for a captain so destitute of funds that he was unable to join his regiment, Lacante contrived to make his way into the Duplays’ dining-room, where he found a dozen people seated at the table ; but before he had time to express his wishes he was flying from the place as fast as he could run under a torrent of abuse from the festive circle, one of whom threatened him “with a sound drubbing.”² The more prudent course was to risk no step of the kind without being introduced by some intimate friend : it was also necessary that one of the Demoiselles Duplay should be interested in the applicant ; their intervention alone could triumph over the inflexibility of Robespierre’s orders. Ouvrard, when he resolved to attempt the rescue of his fellow-townsman of Nantes on their being brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal, was wiser than Lacante. Taking advantage of Robespierre’s temporary absence he hastened to Duplay’s house, was received by two of the young women, entreated them earnestly to secure him an interview with their guest, and obtained from them a promise to do their best. On the following day the youngest of the girls joyfully told him that he would be received on the morrow. At the hour fixed he was introduced without any difficulty, but

in a state of great emotion, into the dining-room, where the terrible tribune was drinking his coffee with Éléonore and Élizabeth. Robespierre received Ouvrard courteously and pressed him to share his breakfast, but declared he could do nothing for the people from Nantes. "Go and see Fouquier-Tinville," he advised, "or his registrar."¹

"Robespierre," it has been said, "paid in affection for the services rendered him by his adopted family."² Affection was certainly the only payment he made, but his favour amply rewarded his associates for the admiration and care they lavished on him. All who were in his circle and showed him devotion derived benefit from his protection. Didiée the locksmith and Gravier the distiller—two devotees—were on the jury of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and for doing nothing but declaring themselves "convinced" drew a salary of 6,500 francs a year. The printer Nicolas was also elected a juryman and given a post on the Committee of General Security,³ and, to his still greater satisfaction, overwhelmed with orders from the Government. He soon became rich, on which subject Camille Desmoulins was imprudent enough to make merry: "Last January, only, I saw M. Nicolas dining on a baked apple. . . . Would anyone believe that by Nivôse more than 150,000 francs would be owed by the Tribunal for printing to that *sans-culotte* who lived so soberly? . . . So it has come to pass that I am an aristocrat within touch of the guillotine, and Nicolas is a *sans-culotte* within touch of a fortune."⁴ Garnier-Launay and Lohier the grocer, whose wares were eaten at the Duplays' table, performed the high functions of judges at the same tribunal; and Duplay himself, who was also on the jury, as we have seen, was given in addition to that office important orders for carpenter's work by the Committees. When the hall of the Convention was fitted out he received fairly large sums,

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and one of his bills amounted to 60,000 *livres*¹ : it was he who, when the Feast of the Supreme Being was in preparation, was commissioned to cover the basin in the garden of the Tuilleries with planking on which to erect the statue of Atheism, for 15,800 *livres*² : and it is further recorded that he received a sum of 12,939 *livres* for his share in building the great amphitheatre that was placed against the façade of the palace.³ The decorator Cietty, who, though an Italian, was on the General Council of the Commune of Paris, had leisure nevertheless for the lucrative task of papering the halls of the Committee of Public Safety⁴ ; and when one reads in the *Moniteur* or elsewhere that the bearers of such obscure names as Laviron and Baudement were pitchforked over the heads of other men into the popular committee, whose office was to point out *suspects* and hand them over to Fouquier-Tinville, one cannot help thinking that these persons had some claim to such a mark of favour. And in fact Laviron, a carpenter at Crêteil, was Madame Duplay's cousin : his elder brother, like Didiée, Gravier, and Duplay, was on the jury of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and threatened to leave the place unless one or two hundred heads were cut off daily.⁵ Otherwise, he said, "I shall be seen here no more." As for Baudement, who was also a member of the Committee of the people, he was a gardener from Thiais who had worked for Pierre Vaugeois. . . . He boasted of having breakfasted "with his friend Robespierre," and, with more determined patriotism than that of his colleague Laviron, declared that it would be impossible to do with less than seventy thousand heads.⁶ Auzat, Duplay's son-in-law, an undistinguished "man of the law" at Issoire, was made Director of Military Transports⁷ ; and to remove all appearance of favouritism from this appointment the Committee of Public Safety inquired into Auzat's qualifications, applying to Nicolas the

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printer in order to make sure of correct information.¹ The matter, in short, was arranged among friends. Calandini, too, had his way to make—and made it rapidly. Since he had been a private in the Corsican Regiment before devoting himself to the art of re-soling boots, he was given a command in the army of the Republic. In the year II he was Adjutant-General in command of the third division of the Army of the North.²

It is interesting to picture the scene in Madame Duplay's little salon on the evenings when these friends of the Incorruptible were gathered in the Rue Saint-Honoré after their day's work—and not these only, but others for whom equally generous provision was made, for it would be easy to lengthen the list. They came in from the Commune, from the people's Committee, and from the hateful Tribunal. They had been spending their time in drawing up lists of *suspects*, marking the names of poor victims who were to be deported or guillotined,³ supplying the scaffold with its daily ration. They had heard cries and sobs of despair; they had seen poor women, blanched with horror, stiffening themselves to keep from falling when they heard their death-sentence; they had passed, on their way hither, through the vestibules of the Palais de Justice, that vast factory of organised murder—where women's hair was being shorn by the executioner's scissors, and trembling hands were being bound with cords that would soon be unknotted, but only when the hands were cold and stiff. They had watched the carts being loaded with men and women on the way to death, and now they were seated at the dinner-table, smiling and calm, with excellent appetites and gallant manners to the ladies. While the girls were bringing the coffee Buonarotti opened the harpsichord. Le Bas sang *Tandis que tout sommeille* or *Le Bien-aimé ne revient pas*, and the others listened with delight, glad to be alive and to be there.

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An idyll was born of these gatherings. Élizabeth Duplay, familiarly known as Babet, the youngest and gayest of the carpenter's daughters, became melancholy and pensive. Charlotte Robespierre sometimes took her to the Convention ; and one day Le Bas, seeing them from his seat among the deputies, went up to speak to them in the gallery, where they were occupied in peeling oranges. He accepted an orange and lent his opera-glasses to Babet that she might amuse herself by recognising, in the huge semi-circle full of noise and movement, the most celebrated deputies. He noticed on the girl's finger a little ring that roused his interest and curiosity, and that he wished to see at close quarters. Babet, greatly agitated, took the ring from her finger and gave it to him to examine at leisure ; but at that moment Le Bas heard his name called. Some measure was on the point of being put to the vote. He ran hastily down the steps and was lost in the throng. The sitting came to an end, but still he did not reappear ; and Élizabeth was obliged to return to the Rue Saint-Honoré, the richer by a pair of incriminating opera-glasses but robbed of her ring and in great danger of a scolding. Charlotte, no longer of an age to be disturbed by this decorous prelude to romance, consoled her simple-minded friend ; Madame Duplay observed nothing ; only Robespierre was surprised by the girl's change of mood. "Little Élizabeth," he said, "look upon me as your best friend, as a kind brother ; I will give you the advice that everyone needs at your age." But she confessed nothing. She was very sad, for she had heard that Le Bas was seriously ill and was not attending the sittings of the Assembly. She was afraid of the unknown emotion that filled all her thoughts. A great love had taken possession of her heart.

One day in June she saw him again—but how changed ! It was in the garden of the Jacobin Club,

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on a lovely spring evening. They talked together ; and he declared he was thinking of marrying. He begged Élizabeth to find him a wife, a very gay wife, who loved pleasure and nice clothes, and would not worry herself about the care of her children. The poor love-lorn girl, in her confusion, had much ado to keep from crying. Seeing her emotion, he confessed he had wished to test her. He took her hand : " It is you," he said, " it is you that I have been cherishing in my heart since the day that I saw you at the Convention. . . . Yes, my Élizabeth; if you will let me, I will ask your parents for you to-day." In a trembling voice she stammered : " I too, Philippe, have loved you since that day. . . . I have your glasses still. . . ." " And I have your ring : I have never been parted from it since the day I fell ill." He talked to her for a long time, and she listened as though in a dream. Madame Duplay joined them, and they all went together to sit under the trees of the Tuileries, where Le Bas made his request. The mother did not dare to decide without consulting Duplay, and on their return home Babet, holding her breath, listened through the thin wall to the whispering of her parents, and was aware of consultations that lasted until one o'clock in the morning. To these Robespierre was summoned, and she heard him pronounce this oracle : " Do not hesitate, my friend, Le Bas is the worthiest of men ! Élizabeth will be happy."

Philippe presented himself on the following morning at nine o'clock. Babet, with a beating heart, was ironing linen in the dining-room. " Courage !" he breathed—though greatly agitated himself—and entered the *salon* where he was awaited by Duplay. After a long conversation Élizabeth was bidden to join them. The carpenter, who never abdicated his authority, took a severe tone, inveighed against the ingratitude of daughters, and protested that, owing to

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her concealments and lack of confidence in her mother, the designing Élizabeth should never gain her father's consent. He continued enlarging on this theme while she choked with sobs, till Philippe intervened, imploring her not to make herself ill, and assuring her that her kind father would forgive her and would not oppose the marriage.

"Well then," said Duplay, "you may have her; she's a good little girl." Robespierre came down from his tiny room and said a few words, and some chocolate was brought in, which the Duplay parents, Le Bas, and Robespierre drank together while the newly betrothed girl returned to her ironing.¹

The marriage was celebrated at the Commune on the 26th August, by Hébert—*Père Duchesne*. Robespierre acted as witness for Le Bas, and Élizabeth was supported by her uncle Pierre Vaugeois, the carpenter of Choisy. The young couple set up house temporarily in the Rue de l'Arcade, in one of the houses owned by Duplay, but soon afterwards settled in the Rue Neuve-de-Luxembourg,² in third-floor rooms overlooking the court. Here Elizabeth was quite near her parents' house, where blessings never ceased to be poured out upon the extraordinary man to whom the carpenter's family owed so much distinction and happiness.

And suddenly tragedy took the stage. On the morning of the 4th of Prairial Paris was stupefied by the news that Collot d'Herbois had been assassinated during the night—Collot, the ex-actor, the fine speaker, the colleague and almost the rival of Robespierre on the Committee of Public Safety! On the opening of the sitting Barère announced the terrible news to the horrified Assembly. The murderer was a man called Admiral, formerly a servant in a noble family, and at the moment employed at the Lottery. For a whole week this monster had been preparing for his crime: he

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sold his furniture to enable him to buy two pistols and a musket. His choice first fell upon Robespierre, and on the morning of the 3rd he left his lodging at No. 4, Rue Favart, and made his way to Duplay's house by way of the boulevards. He made inquiries of a milk-woman, who advised him to apply to the men in the carpenter's workshop. On entering the courtyard he found there a volunteer with his arm in a sling, and a woman, both of whom assured him that Robespierre was extremely busy and could see no one. Much annoyed, the assassin ate some breakfast at Roulot's, at the end of the Terrasse des Feuillants, where he spent fifteen francs, and then, turning towards the Tuileries, entered the Convention Hall and took a seat in one of the public galleries. A speech by Cambon sent him into a profound sleep, whence he only awoke at the end of the sitting. He roamed about for some time in the anterooms of the Assembly, but Robespierre did not appear. Then Admiral sauntered from café to café until the evening, when he played a game of draughts with a young man, had some supper at the eating-house of Dufils in the Rue Favart, and returned to his lodging at eleven o'clock at night. It had occurred to him that Collot d'Herbois was living in the same house as himself : what was the use, then, of pursuing a deputy who could not be found, when he had another under his hand ? So he climbed up to his room on the fifth floor, examined his weapons, and lay in wait for a propitious moment.

At one o'clock there was a knock on the door of the house : Collot was coming in. Admiral leaned over the bannisters and saw the deputy's servant-maid come out of a room on the third floor with a lighted candle in her hand, and go down to open the door for her master. Then he bounded on to the stairs and dashed down them, four steps at a time, like one

possessed, and springing at Collot, who had nearly reached his own door, cried : “ Stop where you are ! Your last hour has come ! ” His first pistol-shot missed fire : he fired again at random, and rushed upstairs again like a madman to shut himself up in his room. The terrified maid-servant flung open a window and clamoured for the guard. In an instant the house was full of people. A whole patrol armed with pikes, who were under the colonnade of the neighbouring theatre, ran in tumultuously and jostled one another on the stairs ; a man in his nightshirt, with bare legs, was in command of them ; it was Bertrand Arnaud, a member of the Commune, who was another inhabitant of the house. He had hurried down from his bed, only taking the time to throw his municipal sash over his simple costume. They all climbed to the fifth floor to lay siege to the quarters of the assassin, who had barricaded himself into his room. His door was suddenly half-opened, and another shot rang out, wounding one of the assailants, “ the brave and too-happy Geffroy,” a locksmith of that section. There was a rush for the door, and the murderer was captured and triumphantly led away to the guard-house.¹ Such was the bare theme of Barère’s narrative, which he elaborated with all the oratorical ornaments which his habitual fluency of speech put at his command. “ Crime and assassination kept vigil at the door of this temple of the laws ! ” “ They dwelt beneath the same roof as the representatives of the people, that they might deal their blows with greater confidence.” “ The impious heirs of the Capets must have fresh victims. . . . Let us poison, let us assassinate, is the answer of the allied tyrants.” “ The English Government has vomited treason and war into our midst and surrounded the national Convention with assassins. . . .” And Couthon, after conjuring the Supreme Being to keep ceaseless guard over “ the

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honest men who do honour to His Providence," expressed his indignation that the horrible man Admiral should have dared to pretend he was a native of Puy-de-Dôme.¹ It was not true, it was not possible: all the inhabitants of the department denied it: "only England could have vomited such a monster." All this was interspersed with frenzied bursts of applause. Finally Collot himself appeared at the tribune with an air of modest triumph, and was received with delirious acclamations: for he was not dead: he was not even wounded. Being alarmed by Admiral's sudden attack he had dropped his walking-stick, and as he stooped to pick it up the second shot passed over his head. It was finally decreed that since, three years earlier, "in a time of degradation and shame," the Constituent Assembly had listened to "the insignificant and disgusting bulletins of the health of a perfidious king," the Convention should do itself the honour of recording every day in its minutes the state of health of the brave locksmith Geffroy, who had been wounded in saving the life of a representative of the people. For more than a month,² therefore, at the opening of every sitting, the bulletin of Geffroy's doctors was read aloud, in spite of the fact that those doctors were of the opinion that his life had never been endangered by the wound. When he was at last cured, and appeared at the bar of the hall supported by two surgeons and followed by his whole family; and when Collot, recalling his days on the stage, left his seat to embrace him and lead him to the presidential chair,³ declaring that "the Revolution was nothing but the constant and daily practice of austere and fruitful virtues," the emotion of the deputies was such that they welcomed Geffroy among them and made him sit at the summit of the Mountain, amid shouts of delight from the whole audience.⁴

In this affair it was Robespierre who was most

hardly hit. On the 4th Prairial, the day of the attempted murder, Taschereau was dining with the Duplays¹—Taschereau who, as we have said, lived on the second floor of the very house in the Rue Favart that was the scene of the crime. Robespierre, therefore, was most carefully informed of every little incident in the drama, and could judge for himself how greatly the ovations and obviously fictitious emotion of the Conventionists were out of proportion to the truth of the facts. His suspicious and jealous nature could not fail to be troubled by these buffooneries : he saw in them an intrigue aimed at himself. And in this he probably saw the truth. At this moment when he was on the point of reaching the pinnacle of his ambition, when his popularity had singled him out as a man indispensable and unique, suddenly the whole attention and interest of the country was absorbed by that play-actor Collot, whom he had long abhorred and distrusted. In twelve days' time the Convention would be electing new officials : without a doubt Admiral's "victim" would be made president : and it would therefore be Collot who, in that capacity, would reap all the honour at the approaching fête, the sumptuous preparations for which were creating in Paris a sensation that spread to the provinces and even to foreign countries. So Robespierre would have conceived and carried out the whole affair, and would be robbed of the glory ! Another man would profit by his work ! He—unnoticed in the ranks of his six hundred colleagues—would be forced to listen to the acclamations that would greet his unworthy supplanter ! What a crushing disappointment ! Another blow from his relentless fate ! The Supreme Being, for Whom he had done so much, owed him a miracle that should avenge him. It was not long delayed.

On that same day, the 4th of Prairial, or Friday the 23rd May, at about nine o'clock in the evening,

a young and rather pretty girl, in the dress of a dainty little *ouvrière*, passed under the archway leading to the Duplays' house. Éléonore was mounting guard in the court, assisted by her neighbour Didiée, locksmith and juryman, Châtelet the painter, who was also on the jury of the Tribunal, and Boullanger, a member of the jewellers' guild and second aide-de-camp to Hanriot, the general in command of the revolutionary army. The Jacobins were not sitting that evening, and Robespierre was probably at home. The stranger asked if she could see him, but Éléonore answered that he was away. Then the young work-girl, making no secret of her disappointment, grumbled "that she had been looking for him for three hours; was it not the duty of a public official to be at the disposal of every citizen?" These sentiments seemed irreverent; the aide-de-camp and the two jurymen seized her and carried her off to the Committee of General Security. As they walked they drew her into conversation. She said that in the old days, when people went to see the King, they were admitted at once; and when one of the men observed that she seemed to regret the kings of old, she answered with a sort of excited ardour: "I would shed every drop of my blood to have one; that's my opinion; you are tyrants."¹

Before the Committee she gave her name as Anne-Cécile Renault. She was twenty years old and lived with her father, a stationer in the city, in the Rue de la Lanterne, at the corner of the Rue des Marmousets, near the Pont Notre-Dame. She submitted to the examination with an air of assurance and even some arrogance, alleging that she wished to meet Robespierre "to find out if she liked him," and "see what a tyrant was like." Vadier must have been present, for among the questions put to Cécile we find these: "Do you know the Rue Contrescarpe? Dom Gerle? Catherine Théot?" The old inquisitor was trying to

swell his report, which was then only in the bud and had as yet had but slight nourishment ; but the little Renault had never heard those names. A woman who happened to be in the committee-room as a petitioner searched her and found on her two small pocket-knives, one of tortoise-shell and one of ivory and silver. The examination being over she observed that on her way to the Rue Saint-Honoré she had left a little parcel of linen at the Café Payen, near the Convention. Didiée and Châtelet ran to fetch it : she made no difficulty about admitting that she had provided herself with this parcel lest she should be short of linen "in the place she was going to be taken to." "To what place do you mean to refer ?" "To the prison, on the way to the guillotine."

At eleven o'clock that night she was lodged in the Conciergerie. An hour later Héron arrested Renault her father, whom he found sobbing and miserable over the girl's unexplained absence at the supper-hour. All the evening he had waited for her in a state of anguish. At the same time Héron took away Renault's son and an old nun who was Cécile's aunt : he learnt that there were two other brothers serving in the army, and warrants of arrest were issued against them also. He took advantage of being in the house to inspect little Cécile's room, and saw there, over the bed, "a sort of banner ornamented with a crown, a cross, and some fleurs-de-lis in silver paper.¹ This was nearly everything that could be discovered with regard to the sentiments of the "criminal," though the ever-zealous Fouquier-Tinville moved heaven and earth to exaggerate the affair and exhibit his prowess. According to the neighbours Cécile was a little coquette who spent all her money on clothes, and was in debt even to the work-women and tradespeople of the district. She had recently ordered a blue taffetas gown from Citoyenne Cruel, a dressmaker, whom she

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had begged to "push forward the work." "One cannot tell what may happen," she said; "I might be sent to the guillotine; I want to settle my affairs first." She could not write nor even sign her name, and her answers in the numerous examinations to which she was subjected by Dumas—one of the Presidents of the Tribunal and a fervent Robespierrist—show that she was either out of her mind or wished to die for some reason that she would not reveal. A man who saw her at the Conciergerie thought that "the wild movements of her eyes seemed to indicate madness."¹

No matter! Robespierre won the game from Collot. When, on the Saturday morning, a rumour spread through Paris that the Incorruptible had just fallen a victim to a "new Corday," the emotion was intense. He was no more wounded than his colleague, but in this joust between the assassinated he easily carried away the palm; his case excelled the other in its mystery and romance, and on the evening of the 6th Prairial, at the sitting of the Jacobins, his triumph was complete.² Collot had come yet again to recount his adventure and embellish it with heroic details and harangues in the style of Livy: the brave Geffroy had been proclaimed a Jacobin with acclamations, when Robespierre entered. Voulland the President—a member of the Committee of General Security—flung himself into his arms, and when the illustrious victim began to speak it was with so much tact and modesty that every heart was moved to its depths. Far from relating, like his rival, the story of his assassination (at which, indeed, he had not been present), he refused to regard it from any point of view but that of the public interest, and discoursed like a man already dead: "The defenders of liberty have never thought themselves likely to live through a long succession of years; their life is uncertain and precarious, . . . ,

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I, who do not believe in the necessity of living, but only in Virtue and Providence, am now placed in the conditions wherein the assassins desired to put me. . . . The assassins' weapon has given me greater freedom and made me more redoubtable to all the enemies of the people. . . . Men of France, rely upon us to employ the short term of life that Providence grants us in fighting the enemies by whom we are surrounded. We swear, by the daggers that are red with the blood of the martyrs of the Revolution and have again been sharpened to attack us, that we will exterminate, to the last man, the scoundrels who would fain steal from us our happiness and our liberty! . . ." The allusion to new enemies whom his mistrustfulness was already suspecting was very disquieting, and Voulland no doubt understood it. That poor man was really feeling it very awkward to preside at so dramatic a meeting without having a chance to put in a word. He contrived to murmur that he, too, had been threatened with death, and by a woman; but he hastened to reassure his brothers: "There is no danger now; the Tribunal did justice on that *citoyenne* two days ago."¹

Unanimous and prolonged applause greeted Robespierre's discourse, "from which shone forth true courage, the nobility of a republican soul, the most generous devotion to the cause of liberty, and the most pronounced philosophy."² Maximilien, then, was feeling very sure of having ousted his rival, when a brother of little perception, one Rousselin, moved a resolution to confer civic honours on the brave Geffroy on the occasion of the fête that was being prepared for the 20th Prairial. If the resolution were passed Collot and his preserver would be the heroes of the ceremony. . . . Instantly Robespierre's voice was raised again. In a few words the inept or treacherous Rousselin was completely routed—depicted as the tool

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of tyrants, a thief, and, worse still, a belated follower of Danton. He was expelled on the spot from the Society, ejected from the hall, and brought before the Committee of General Security for having dared to divert towards the only man wounded in the “massacre” the interest that ought to be bestowed on the Incorrputible alone. It was plain that nothing could resist the latter: he braved even ridicule with impunity. He had a fair wind behind him: it was only prudent to make as much headway as possible. In the evening of the 16th Prairial, four days before the fête, he was unanimously elected President of the Convention.¹

The heart of Paris was gay as it awaited this fête that seemed to promise such wonders: even in the prisons preparations were made to do honour to the Supreme Being, with the idea that the evil days were over. The mere fact that the Government had established the existence of the *Bon Dieu* by law, if only a revolutionary *Bon Dieu*, was surely the forerunner of an era of justice, and perhaps even of mercy. Moreover there was a very novel feature in the ceremony: the people were to play a part in it. David, manifestly inspired by Robespierre, had drawn up a pompous, grandiloquent programme, in which every detail was foreseen and regulated, down to the very tears of joy that the spectators were to shed, and even to the beauty of the day and the brilliance of the sun: “Already the sounds of martial music are echoing on every side, and thus the peace of slumber is succeeded by an awakening to enchantment. . . . At the sight of the beneficent sun . . . friends, brothers, husbands and wives, children, old men and mothers embrace one another. . . . Doorways are decorated with garlands and verdure; the chaste wife decks the floating locks of her beloved daughter with flowers, while the infant



THE MOUNTAIN IN THE CHAMP DE MARS.

Sketch from nature by Michel.

"I was there, and I vouch for the accuracy of the sketch," says a note by Duplessis-Bertaux, to whom this drawing belonged.—*Cabinet des Estampes*.

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at the breast clings more closely to its mother's bosom, of which it is the fairest ornament . . . the old man, his eyes wet with tears . . ."¹ and so on. Such was the style of the programme of these festivities to which all Paris was summoned ; and, moreover, *Details of the Order to be Observed* were widely circulated, informing all the groups taking part in the ceremony how they were to behave. At five o'clock in the morning the drums would begin to beat, and the representatives of the forty-eight sections were immediately to bestir themselves : they were to be massed in such a way that they could march when the signal was given at eight o'clock by the gun on the Pont Neuf : they were to form themselves in square battalions, twelve abreast, the lads bearing muskets or pikes, but the grown men unarmed : every woman was to hold a bunch of roses in her hand, and all the girls were to carry a basket of flowers, as at the *ci-devant* Feast of Corpus Christi. To guide the movements of these forty-eight battalions fifty members of the Society of Jacobins were appointed stewards of the fête, besides the twenty-seven artists who had taken part in the preparations.²

The preparations in question promised a scene of great grandeur. The immense amphitheatre that had been built against the central pavilion of the Tuileries, on the side towards the garden, stood up—very fine and dignified, and adorned with vases and statues—as high as the windows of the first floor, whence the balconies had been removed to secure communication with the great Salon, where the members of the Convention were to assemble.³ Above the round basin arose—slightly deformed, owing to the material employed—Atheism in inflammable canvas,⁴ enthroned beside Folly, and surrounded by Ambition, Egoism, Discord, False Simplicity and other enemies of the people's happiness. In the Champ de

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Mars stood the sacred Mountain, displaying its grotto, its tombs, its temple, and its tripods upon its steep sides, and surmounted by a vigorous oak-tree and a high column. But the object that excited the liveliest curiosity was the car promised on the programme, the car that was being created in the workshops of the Garde-Meuble by Michallon the sculptor, and Montpellier, a moulder of plaster figures. Drawn by eight bulls, this symbolic car was to carry an image of Liberty seated in the shadow of an oak-tree on a pile of cardboard fruit, and real agricultural emblems furnished by Citizen Duchesne, a farmer.¹

David was by no means the creator of all these symbols: the provinces had, in this line, been in advance of Paris. One might fill a volume—and a merry volume it would be!—with tales of the revolutionary extravagances for which the imagination of the departmental committees was responsible. During the previous winter, for instance, the *sans-culottes* of Montmédy had celebrated the re-capture of Toulon by organising a procession, in which there figured a car carrying Fecundity. "She is represented," says the official report, "by a young woman suckling her child; round her are several other little ones, smiling at their mother." It was followed by another car, and this was of funereal appearance, "shaded by dark cypress trees." It bore a tomb, surmounted by a pyramid. "A woman of touching beauty, with garments flowing and unstudied, and hair hanging loose, leans in a motionless attitude of grief upon the tomb which she is watering with her tears." This woman of touching beauty was supposed to be "the widow of Citoyen Beauvais, the representative of the people, who was massacred by the English at Toulon." Now Montmédy learnt—when the fête was over—that Beauvais was not dead, and that he was a widower! Still more striking attractions, however, were to be

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seen at this festival : among others the assault and capture of a rebellious town by the patriots. "The walls are escaladed ; the enemy is put to flight ; the town is abandoned to the flames ; the vengeance of the nation reigns ; the infamous Pitt is delivered up by the English themselves, who abjure their errors and beg for an alliance ; a stake is set up and the accursed betrayer is burnt. . . ." The part of Pitt, an ill-starred rôle, was doubtless given to some aristocrat. The festival ended with the dance of the Carmagnole and "the most tender embraces."¹

Such things as these, fine as they appear on paper, are grotesque in reality. David was well aware of this, and wished the ceremony of the 20th Prairial to be worthy of his great name. He did nothing, moreover, without consulting Robespierre, for whose personal apotheosis the preparations were, properly speaking, being made. The latter concerned himself with the smallest details : for instance, when he heard on the 16th Prairial that the Managing Committee had chosen Marie-Joseph Chénier to compose the words of the hymn that was to be sung on the mountain by the soloists and choruses of the National Institute of Music and the Opera, he flatly rejected the poem of that factious Girondin, in whom he scented an enemy. The papers were already printing Chénier's verses ; Gossec had finished the music ; it was printed ; no matter : though only three days before the fête, disobedience was impossible. By chance an unknown poet called Desorgues came forward with an ode, the words of which were perfectly adaptable to the composer's melody, and it was hurriedly substituted for the other.² It was probably Robespierre himself, even, who conceived the idea of associating the mass of the people with the official choir ; and, to avoid a cacophony that would have injured the dignity of the fête, the school-children were despatched to the

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Institute of Music to take lessons in the rendering of the hymn, while music-teachers ran about the town making it known to the public. There are several narratives that depict even such masters as Gossec, Lesueur, Méhul, and Cherubini, on the eve of the ceremony, perched on a barrel or a chair at various cross-roads, with the passers-by gathering meekly round them to repeat their lesson.¹ Gossec, being little disposed to hear his work murdered by these artless interpreters, had written for their use a very simple, very melodious version, reserving his "superb, grand composition" for the experienced artists whose task it was to execute it worthily.²

At last the great day dawned—a radiant day : brilliant sunshine, a mild breeze, soft airs perfumed with the garlands of flowers and green foliage that decked even the poorest houses, and, over Paris and its people, who had risen in the freshness of dawn, one of those skies of the Ile de France, all quivering and pearly, which no other sky can equal in charm and enchantment. This Décadi, the 20th Prairial or 8th June, was Whit Sunday, and this coincidence, whether designed or fortuitous, seemed also a happy omen.

In the house of the Duplays everyone had been early awake. Robespierre, arrayed in a long purplish-blue coat encircled by a wide tricoloured scarf, a waist-coat of piqué with points, dimity breeches, and parti-coloured stockings, descended to the dining-room, where the whole family, gathered round the morning coffee, were ready to set off to the fête. Even Élizabeth, though on the point of becoming a mother, was intending to go to the Champ de Mars. Maximilien did not take the time to eat any breakfast ; he placed on his carefully curled and powdered hair³ a hat adorned with high tricoloured plumes, seized the bouquet of artificial corn, cornflowers, and poppies that he was to hold in his hand throughout the day, and started off

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at about nine o'clock through streets resounding with the beating of drums, and alive with men in their best clothes, youths carrying arms, and girls and women all dressed alike in white, and all happily agitated in view of their expected pleasure.

He went straight to the Tuileries, not without pausing, probably, at the foot of the statue of Atheism, on which the workmen had been engaged for part of the night and were now putting the finishing-touches.¹ It was necessary for him, in fact, to consult with the pyrotechnists on the subject of setting fire to the effigy, since it was to fall into ashes at a sign from him. That was the most difficult scene in his day's performance, and the most likely to create laughter among the evilly disposed. He climbed the great staircase of the Grand-stand that had been built against the palace, every landing of which was already crowded with seats and music-stands; for here the musicians and singers were to be placed, to the number of over two hundred. Everywhere there were vases of flowers, antique busts on pillars, garlands, and fluttering flags. At the summit of the amphitheatre a semicircle of chairs was arranged for the members of the Convention; and isolated on the free space in the middle, on a large new carpet of the three colours—blue, white, and red²—stood Robespierre's own arm-chair, raised on a platform³: his throne. At the crown of the central dome of the palace—which wore a head-dress in the form of an enormous tricoloured Phrygian cap mounted on an iron frame—a banner more than six yards long waved the colours of the victorious Republic in the air.⁴

Maximilien passed on into the palace, which was still empty at this early hour, and made his way to the Hall of Liberty, the ante-room of the Convention. There he met Sempronius Gracchus, a foppish *sans-culotte* of twenty-six, whose real name was Joachim

Vilate. He came of a provincial bourgeois family and had taken Holy Orders in his youth, but in 1792 he repudiated them, being seized with revolutionary madness and "an enthusiasm for beauty and virtue." In Paris, where he arrived with no luggage but a sound classical education, he made his way rapidly. He had "a tender heart," a handsome face, distinguished manners, and a talent for ingratiating himself. Barère took a fancy to him and made him known to Robespierre. Vilate worked for them both as "an informer"—for which we may read *spy*—and by both was soon regarded with suspicion. Until a well-paid post could be found for him, he was placed on the jury of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and, to give him the opportunity of observing all that went on, granted a pretty suite of rooms in the palace itself; he lived in the Pavillon de Flore, and his windows looked over the national garden. He led a very agreeable life, supping with the most powerful men of the day "in famous restaurants," and being invited to the select parties at Clichy and Saint-Cloud. He took with him "his friend," an enchanting brunette "with a complexion of lilies and roses," prodigiously gay, "brilliantly attractive," and in good truth, it would seem, excessively alluring; for "that little thing" was regarded with great aversion by the mistresses of Barère and Vadier, whose "sixty years of virtue" did not keep him from sharing in the amorous pastimes of the gayer members of the Convention.

Vilate invited Robespierre to wait in his rooms until the hour of the ceremony, and the President consented. Vilate, who was expecting friends, had prepared a light meal for his guests, and urged Robespierre, who was still fasting, to eat something. The latter laid down his bouquet, but ate little and talked still less. He seemed to be far away in the clouds; his contracted features were relaxed; his face, usually so

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sombre, was shining with inward joy, and his whole attitude revealed a hectic sort of enthusiasm. He had taken up a position near the window, and with manifest and profound emotion looked out upon the crowd which was streaming into the immense space in well-drilled battalions. The women, all in white dresses, took up their position on the side nearest to the river, the men on the side next the Terrasse des Feuillants : their long waving lines were lost in the deep shadow of the bushy chestnut-trees,¹ and the wide central path of the garden was left free. Here were placed the groups of drummers, the battalion of youths surrounding the standard-bearers, the artillery with their guns, the musical institutions, and the delegations of old men, all of whom were drawn up in orderly ranks reaching from the swing-bridge to the flower-beds close to the palace, which had been planted that spring with potatoes to give a democratic air to the royal garden. Their agrarian appearance made a blot on the theatrical scene.²

For a long time Maximilien contemplated this throng, whose joyous excitement filled him with pride. It was at his call that these hundreds of thousands had come together : one thought united them all, and it was he who had suggested it to them. Vilate heard him murmur : "That is the most interesting portion of the human race. O Nature, how sublime, how sweet is thy power ! How pale tyrants must grow at the thought of this fete!"³ If these words have been truthfully recorded it is plain that, even when addressing himself only, the Incorruptible cultivated an impressive style. He lingered long in this reverie ; then, suddenly seeing that the hour had come for him to appear on the scene, he went off so precipitately that he forgot his bouquet, which Vilate presented to his pretty mistress. Perhaps it was owing to this misadventure that Robespierre was late in joining his

colleagues : he was inevitably obliged to procure another bouquet, and the few minutes employed in the search for one displeased some of the deputies, who were already annoyed with their President on account of the burdensome task he was imposing on them.

When he appeared on the terrace the Conventionists were already in their places ; and the sight of him, arriving alone, made a sensation. He reached the raised arm-chair that was reserved for him : in the distance the rolling of drums was heard, and the numerous orchestra ranged on the various levels of the amphitheatre struck up a symphony.

A magnificent scene was spread out before Robespierre as he sat on his pedestal. Sitting round him in a semicircle were the five or six hundred deputies present, nearly all dressed alike in an official costume that they were wearing that day for the first time,¹ and all displaying in their hats a high cluster of tricoloured plumes, which waved together in the summer breeze like a tricoloured sea. On the two sides of the Grand-stand, which descended in graceful curves, were the actors and musicians of the Opera, all the artistes being dressed in white and crowned with roses, and holding a basket filled with flowers in their hands² ; at the foot of the staircase were the drums and the military bands ; and beyond, to the furthest limit of the scene, was spread the population of Paris, in perfect control and order, framing the representative groups who were to figure in the procession. The man who on that sunny day was the target of all eyes, the object of the admiration, curiosity, or astonishment of six hundred thousand human beings, must surely have drawn a parallel in his mind between this culminating point of his life and another day that he could remember. Five years before, as he sat lost in the crowd in his shabby old coat, he had seen above him, far away, the King of France enthroned upon a platform addressing

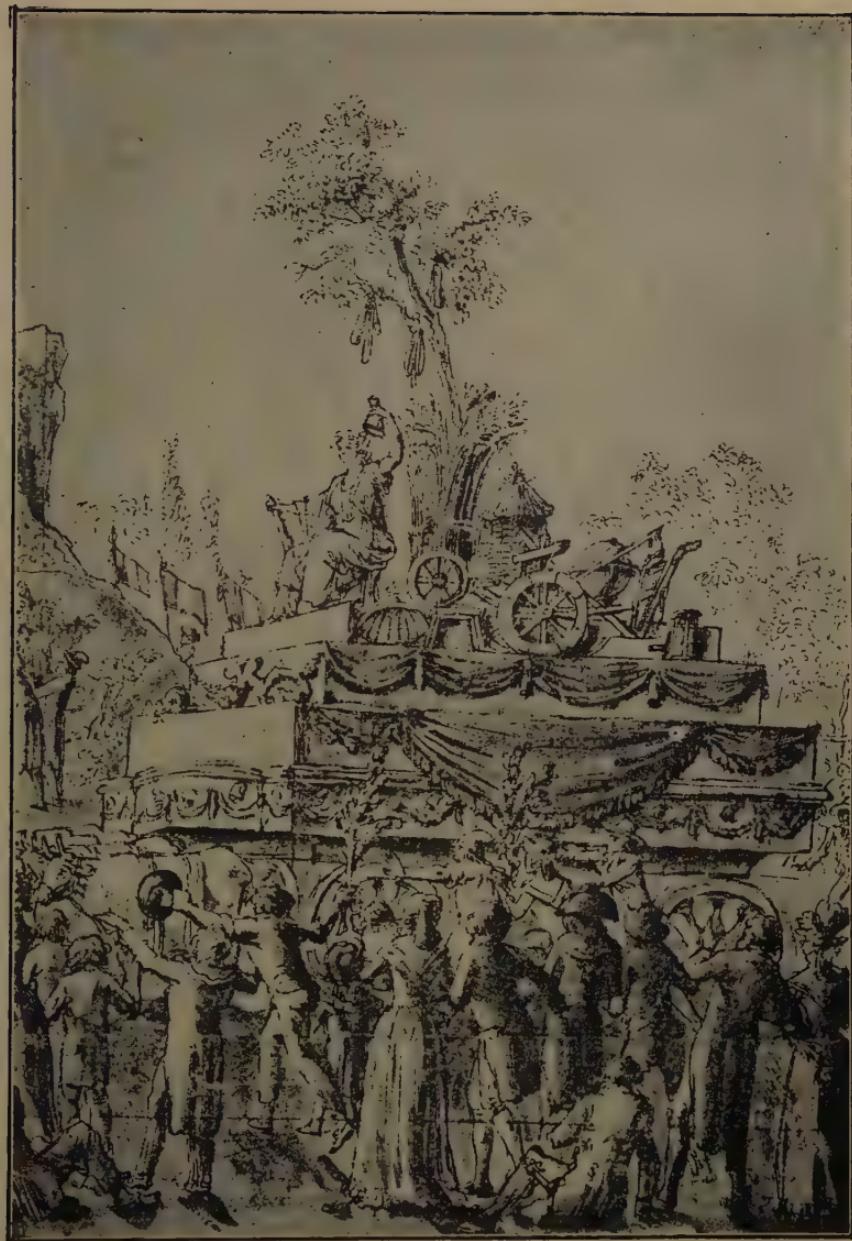
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the deputies of his people, even as to-day he himself, once a little provincial lawyer, was to speak to the immense throng gathered at his feet.

He spoke, then, standing at the balustrade of the amphitheatre. His voice, habitually harsh, was so clear, and his speech so plain, that he was heard at a great distance. His brief address was interrupted several times by applause.¹ Then came the critical moment : he had to leave the balustrade, descend the monumental staircase alone, and cover the great distance that separated the amphitheatre from the basin among the flower-beds, in the centre of which stood the figure of Atheism, which he was about to reduce to powder. There is no narrative that records how he acquitted himself at this difficult point. He advanced "with a light in his hand," say some writers² ; "holding a lighted torch," say others. How was it possible for a man cumbered with such appendages to avoid being ridiculous ? How small and awkward he must have looked in that great scene ! And how was he to walk ? If he went quickly he would seem to be running to a fire ; if he walked deliberately he would look like an officiating priest : only a ballet-master could fulfil such an office with becoming skill. It is very likely, however, that he carried no torch nor any kind of light : certain indications seem to show that Robespierre contented himself with a symbolic gesture. Ruggieri brought forward a torch, the sinister effigy burst into flames, discharging clouds of nauseating smoke, and some workmen perched on a ladder gave a helping hand to the miracle by tearing away fragments of the combustible canvas,³ thus hastening the appearance of the image of Wisdom, which nevertheless emerged in a very black and disreputable state. "It was the saddest Wisdom ever was seen ; her neck seemed to have been cut with a hatchet ; she looked severely at her knees."⁴ The public, being kept at a

distance, applauded the prodigy on the word of the programme ; but when Robespierre returned to his throne on the amphitheatre his colleagues greeted him with titters and jests : "Your wisdom is obscured," they said banteringly. And when he answered : "It has returned to oblivion, that monster that the spirit of monarchy let loose upon France . . ." they burst out laughing without ceremony or shame. The numerous materialists in the Assembly regarded this insult to their opinions as intentionally provocative, and from this moment the spell was broken. The hero of the fête suddenly felt that he was surrounded by enemies, envious of his predominance and repelled by his mysticism.

None the less the ceremonial proceeded, according to David's plan. The choirs had sung the popular version of the hymn composed by Gossec and Desorgues—the version taught on the previous day in the streets—and the good folk had been enchanted with the easy melody that was already familiar to them.¹ The procession was formed to march to the Champ de Mars, now rechristened after the revolutionary manner the *Field of Reunion*. A hundred drums and three military bands set the pace for the march, which was led by a detachment of cavalry preceded by its trumpeters ; then came the sappers, the gunners, the sectional committees, the groups of old men and youths, and the rustic car, slightly overladen with agricultural implements. The idea of the "eight vigorous bulls" had been given up : their place was taken by the same number of slow and placid oxen, sumptuously caparisoned. Surrounded by four cornucopias, a seated figure of Liberty appeared on this car holding a club in her hand : for the sake of greater stability the oak-tree that shaded her was sheathed in a cylinder of tin.² The Convention surrounded the car, marching in a compact body under the protection



THE CAR OF AGRICULTURE AT THE FEAST OF THE SUPREME BEING.

Drawing in the Destailleur Collection. *Cabinet des Estampes.*

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of a tricoloured ribbon, “carried by childhood adorned with violets, youth adorned with myrtles, manhood adorned with oak-leaves, and old age adorned with vine-branches.” Each of the deputies carried a bouquet in his hand. Since they were all fretting and fuming at these antics their deportment was lacking in docility, and they received David’s instructions with a bad grace. David himself was very busy, running up and down the whole column, seeing that proper order was kept and the right distances maintained, waving his plumed hat, and crying: “Room for the delegate of the Convention!”¹ There was also a car of the blind, who sang a hymn to the Deity. A body of cavalry brought the procession to an end.

Robespierre, walking twenty steps in advance of his colleagues, drew all eyes.

A writer who remembered, forty years later, having seen this imposing march, relates that his father, who had brought him to the fête, touched him on the shoulder and said: “Look! There’s Robespierre: the man who is walking alone. . . .” The child looked; and saw a little man with a pale, lean, grave face, walking with measured steps, his hat in his hand and his eyes cast down. His stiff, and at times unsteady gait plainly showed embarrassment, and the melancholy, anxious expression of his face contrasted with the excitement of the turbulent band of deputies.² What the child could not know was that this gloomy man was enduring, at that very moment, the most cruel disillusionment of his whole life. Despite the flourishes of trumpets and salutes and songs and acclamations that greeted him as he passed, he heard only the invectives and the jeers sent after him by his colleagues walking behind him. He recognised the voices: the voice of Bourdon de l’Oise, who spoke of him to the others and to the crowd as a dictator and a charlatan³: the voices of Ruamps, Thirion, Montaut, and above

all Lecointre, a draper of Versailles who, twenty times at least, called him a tyrant and threatened to kill him.¹ Merlin, of Thionville, hearing a woman cry *Vive Robespierre!* gave her an angry push. "Cry *Vive la République!* then, you wretched woman!" Robespierre intervened: "Why ill-treat the poor woman?" he said very gently—so gently that Merlin felt he was lost. . . . Another deputy tells us ironically: "There was not a great deal of incense for the god of the day . . . I heard all the curses . . . uttered loudly enough to reach the ears of the high-priest, in spite of the interval left between him and us . . . it was the hatred felt for him that was the reason for that separation."² He was forced to march on, convulsed with rage, and meditating terrible reprisals on his hostile escort. How could he be surprised at their aversion? Did he not remember that his procession was composed, with a few exceptions, of those who had been unwilling to grant him the King's head, and who, ever since those days, had held their peace, awaiting their hour; former partisans of the Gironde who were silently musing on revenge; friends of Danton who had never forgiven him and only bore with him from fear; savage adherents of the Mountain, who regretted Hébert and Chaumette and their atheistic demonstrations? In his train marched, on this day of triumph, not only these living men who flouted and insulted him, but all the spectres of those whom he had sacrificed that his road might be cleared. As the procession passed out of the national garden it reached the actual site of the scaffold, which had been taken down on the previous evening. Twelve heads—among them that of a volunteer of eighteen—had fallen on that spot the day before, and Citizen Prud'homme had been obliged to work in the night "to clean up, and cover the victims' blood with sand. . . ."³ It was there that Brissot, Vergniaud

and Danton, Camille and his loving Lucille, the Spartan Manon Roland, and many, many others had died, cursing the man who, with inscrutable face and impassive bearing, now crossed this tragic soil.

Bands and choirs, the beating of drums and the sound of trumpets accompanied the procession, whose pace was regulated by the slow movement of the enormous car on which the tree of Liberty oscillated. It was a long march, by way of the Pont de la Révolution and the river-bank, the Place des Invalides, and the Avenue de l'École Militaire, at the end of which rose a triumphal arch in the shape of a level. Beneath this they all passed before turning into the Champ de la Réunion.

It was a marvellous spectacle. When the deputies, the singers, and the musicians—who undoubtedly came in carriages—had climbed the steep pathways and staircases leading to the top of the mountain, and the various groups were ranged in a circle round the symbolic hill that dominated the immense arena, the powerful orchestra struck up the prelude, and the choirs sang Desorgues and Gossec's noble composition, "Father of the Universe." The effect, it is said, was magnificent, at least for those who were close to the mountain, for in that huge space the sound only reached the crowd in fragments. We can also easily believe that the bearing of those who figured in the fête was sometimes, in the course of so long a ceremony, lacking in solemnity. More than one citizen, crowned with oak-leaves, drew a pipe from his pocket and smoked it furtively; more than one maiden "adorned with the flowers of spring" had bread and sausage in her reticule; and certainly a large proportion of the old men carrying vine-branches carried also a hidden pint of wine, in the hope that a drop now and then might put energy into their legs. Of these vulgar details, which David had not foreseen, we have only one

record : that of two aristocrats, a mother and daughter, who from motives of prudence had dressed themselves in white and provided themselves with a bouquet of roses, and, having joined the representatives of their section, were led, keeping time with the beating drums, to the garden of the Tuilleries. Lined up in military order with their companions they waited, standing, till eleven o'clock, when the mother, unable to stand any longer, sat down on the ground. Her daughter did the same, and several women followed their example ; but the commandant of the group ordered them to rise. They begged for leave to rest on the empty benches only a few steps from them, but were brutally refused. Then when the ceremony began and the attention of all in command was rivetted on the amphitheatre where Robespierre was holding forth they adroitly slipped away, escaped through the gates of the garden, and reached home exhausted and dying of thirst.¹

Those whom enthusiasm sustained held out until the end, which was impressive. After Gossec's great chorus the choirs sang some strophes to the Deity to the air of the *Marseillaise*, and the crowd mingled their voices with those of the trained singers perched on the mountain. At the summit of the hill trumpets marked the rhythm, and the conductor of an orchestra beat time with a flag.² At the last lines a formidable cannonade roared out and reverberated among the hills of Passy ; and in docile obedience to the programme the children threw flowers towards the sky, the old men blessed the young, the mothers thanked the Supreme Being for their fertility, and the virgins vowed to marry no citizen who had not served his country. And then the crowd dispersed. Night was near, and the people had been on their feet since five o'clock in the morning.³ Many of them sat down at the base of the mountain to have some food.⁴ It had

been arranged that the procession should break up in the Place des Invalides and that the National Convention should return to the Tuileries in a body ; but the coffee-houses of the Avenue de l'École Militaire attracted great numbers of the thirsty crowd, and the deputies made their way back as best they could, mingled with the stream of ordinary citizens returning to the heart of the town.

In the sudden relaxation of their enforced decorum people gave vent to their resentment. We are told, for instance, that these words were heard : "Look at that blackguard—it's not enough for him to be master, he must be a god as well ! " ¹ and it is said that Le-cointre, who was half mad, approached Robespierre and said to his face : "I like your Fête, but as for you, I hate you ! " ² Vilate relates that Vadier and Barère, in whose company he was, either after their return to the Tuileries or elsewhere, amused themselves by talking in obscure language to mystify Sempronius Gracchus. Barère said : "The *Mère de Dieu* will not be delivered of her divine Word . . ." and Vadier answered with a snigger : "The egg that the hen's sitting on will turn out to be addled. . . ." "I don't understand this theology of yours," said Vilate ; "tell me now, what do you mean by this *Mère de Dieu* ?" "Ah !" replied Barère, smiling at his thoughts, "these are mysteries that the profane can never understand : we mean that the Mother of the Sage who is the centre where heaven and earth must be joined. . . ." And when Vilate demanded an explanation Vadier growled ³ : "He's not joking. H'm, h'm ! there's some truth at the bottom of all that !" Whether these remarks be accurately reported or not, they are evidence of a very open and very real sense of irritation ; for when Elizabeth Le Bas—who, in spite of her approaching confinement, ⁴ had been to the Champ de Mars—was joined by her husband at the end of the festivities, his

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face was full of consternation and his first words were : “ Our country is lost ! ”¹

As night closed in, Robespierre returned in a state of great exhaustion to the Maison Duplay, whence he had started out in the morning with a buoyant heart. His host’s whole family had been present at his triumph, which to their simple minds seemed perfect ; and they congratulated him affectionately. He let them talk. Perhaps he was overwhelmed by the sudden revelation of the immense disproportion between his merits and the crushing rôle he had so rashly assumed. When he saw that great multitude at his feet did he, for the first time, feel an intuition of his own mediocrity ? Or did he, as is more probable, feel afraid of the increasing number of enemies who had been revealed to him on that great height to which he had climbed ? He made no confidence of his anxieties to the good friends round him, but said to them in a prophetic tone : “ You will not see me much longer.”² Out of doors the night was warm, and the people kept up their rejoicings to a late hour. They lingered long near the illuminated palace of the Tuileries, where, before the central pavilion, a fiery star was blazing. Little by little its light grew feebler : gradually it faded, died down, and disappeared.*

That dying star was a symbol like the rest.

IV

ROBESPIERRE'S REVENGE

THOUGH his colleagues in the Convention refused to be his censor-bearers, Robespierre was not on that account unprovided with incense. The daily post brought him clouds of it from every corner of France. It was incense of an inferior quality, it is true, but none the less it seems to have gone to his head, for he kept the twaddle he received from his ingenuous—or perhaps derisive—correspondents, who sometimes swung their censers with too much violence: “Admirable Robespierre, torch, pillar, corner-stone of the edifice of the French Republic, we greet you! . . .”¹ “Crowning and triumph are your due and shall be given you, till the time comes when civic incense rises before the altar that we shall one day raise to you. . . .”² One correspondent compares him “to an eagle soaring to the skies”; another devoutly adopts the form of a litany: “Enlightened *Montagnard*, incomparable genius, protector of patriots, seeing all things, foreseeing all things, overcoming all things. . . .” Two parents who had been blessed with a son informed the Incorruptible that they had ventured to lay “the weight of his illustrious name” upon the new-born infant; a widow of a more practical temperament offered him her fortune and hand. “Ever since the beginning of the Revolution I have been in love with you; but I was fettered, and succeeded in mastering my passion. . . . You are my supreme deity, I look upon you as my guardian-angel. . . .”³ The news of the attempted murder, of which this incomparable man might have

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been the victim, was greeted with a chorus of lamentation and rage : a miracle on the part of the Supreme Being had saved him from the dagger of the new Corday. "Never again will so much virtue, talent, and courage appear in history ; I give thanks to the Supreme Being for guarding your life." Even the Commune of Marion "threw itself at his feet and informed him that it had sung a *Te Deum* in his honour."¹ Louis XIV., at the height of his glory, was never treated with more insane adulation by his people.

The apparent success of the Feast of the Supreme Being resulted in a great number of similar ceremonies, which took the most curious forms. The people in the country districts altogether failed to understand the perfected God established by the decree of the 18th Floréal. They simply believed that the old religion had been restored, and there were persons seen "taking part in the ceremony with their prayer-book and rosary."² At Charonne the organisers had known no better than to place a stoup³ for holy water on the altar they raised to the new Deity, and even in Paris there were those who imagined that the Revolution was at an end ; the market-women repaired to Châtillon with bouquets, which they presented to the ex-nobles, according to the old custom of the market, with the words : "My heart, my king, I must embrace thee," and with congratulations on the protection granted by the Supreme Being to Robespierre.⁴ Had not the latter conceived the idea—an absurd idea, to say the least of it—of taking the constitutional Bishop Le Coz from his prison at Mont Saint-Michel and bringing him to Paris to fill a rôle in the pagan ceremony in the Champ de Mars ?⁵ These symptoms and many others disturbed the majority of the Conventionists, who had grown weary of being burdened with their colleague's yoke ; for his grasping and crafty methods

had enabled him to climb, little by little, to a position of undeserved importance, which had now been justified, in the eyes of France and all Europe, by the splendour of the recent fête.

His reputation, in good truth, was universal : in London and beyond the Rhine it was a common thing to hear of "Robespierre's armies, and Robespierre's policy."¹ Foreigners regarded him as the personification of the French Revolution : his colleagues in the Government were hardly looked upon as ministers at all. What had he done to earn this illusory prestige ? Having always spared himself every kind of dangerous undertaking he had never led troops to victory ; in his speeches we may seek in vain for "a single illuminating word, or a solution, or a fruitful idea, or a useful clue" ; he never initiated any law relating to public education, finance, or national defence ; he had neither Mirabeau's nor Vergniaud's eloquence, nor Camille's wit nor Danton's turbulent audacity ; at the table of the all-powerful Committee his opinion carried no weight ; "in political discussions he contributed nothing but vague generalities,"² and indeed there were many who—like Daunou—taxed him with mental incapacity and a complete lack of legislative ideas. When he spoke it was always of himself, of the dangers to which he was exposed by his love for the people, of the tyrants who made common cause against him, of his integrity, which was genuine, and of his virtuous character, which was disagreeable. He was one of those men whom Bossuet described : "Being blind admirers of their own deeds they cannot endure those of others ; if any criticism comes to their ears they take their revenge with an air of disdain. . . ." Everything that was above his own level he regarded with contempt and hatred : he had a genius for one thing only, and that was suspicion : his perpetual distrust detected traitors and conspiracies on every

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hand : he would become quite absorbed in police inquiries, in which he was very expert and which his colleagues left to him, regarding them "as more repugnant than difficult."¹

And yet—he was master. He had filled the Commune of Paris, the General Staff of the revolutionary army, the administrative committees, and the revolutionary tribunal with men who were his tools, and he had "transferred the national sovereignty to the Jacobins, a turbulent circle whose influence was greater than that of the enslaved Convention."² He was entrenched in that club "as in a fortress, whence he kept up a perpetual fire upon the Committees of the Government."³ How could he be subdued ? From what side could he be attacked ? It was too late : anyone who should dare to deal the first blow was a dead man : and the powerless Conventionists saw looming on the near horizon the horrifying spectre of a dictatorship, the sinister issue of so many struggles and efforts, of so much sacrifice and mourning.

This opposition confined itself to secret cabals, for life was passed in perpetual fear of traps. Robespierre had eyes and ears everywhere ; he was kept so well informed that he seemed to read the most secret thoughts of his silent detractors. In three days' time the re-election of the Committee of Public Safety was due ; he foresaw that some unexpected notion might keep him out of it and that immediate action was necessary. And besides, something was expected of him. There were many who imagined he was about to end the era of imprisonment and execution, and inaugurate an era of mercy ; and certain journals hinted respectfully that "the people were only awaiting a sign from him to abandon themselves to the sweet influences of fraternity."⁴ Others advised him "to proclaim a general amnesty⁵ ;" he alone could do it, and all France would receive it with acclamations.

Then two days after the fête, when he was in the presidential chair, and Barère had announced, with his usual wealth of words, the fortunate successes of the republican army, and the brave Geoffrey's bulletin of health had been read and applauded, the cripple Couthon was seen at the tribune. Out of doors he either drove in a carriage or used a wheeled chair that he was able to control himself; but in the palace of the Tuileries it was necessary for him to be carried, and, as we have already said, a gendarme performed that office. The infirm and affable Couthon, who was "beloved by a virtuous wife and the father of two children as beautiful as Cupid," was considered a placid and moderate man. He necessarily spoke seated, and this attitude gave to his discourses a reassuring appearance of tranquility. He began amid a good deal of commotion; the benches were nearly filled, but no one was listening. The orator spoke approvingly of the good sentiments of his compatriots in the Auvergne, and enumerated the important captures made by the sailors of the Republic—the ordinary routine at the opening of a sitting. Suddenly it became apparent that he was expounding a plan for reforming the judicial system; the words "morality," "humanity," "public interest," "justice," "liberty," and "virtue" were repeated again and again in the course of his speech; and since it was well known that he was Robespierre's mouthpiece on occasions when the latter preferred not to appear, a feeling of astonishment began to grow. Conversation gradually ceased; silence fell. Couthon in his gentle voice was formulating such axioms as these—"a few simple truths," he called them: "Indulgence towards the satellites of tyranny is atrocious; mercy is parricide . . . one should only delay the punishment of the country's enemies for as long as it takes to discover them; and it is not so much a matter of punishing them as of wiping them out";

and, in the conciliating tone of a man who is only asking for slight modifications in a defective system of which experience has proved the mistakes, he tranquilly proceeded to read aloud a bill of twenty-two clauses, which fell upon the silence of the Assembly like so many blows of an axe. The members sat mute, frozen with fear, terrified by what they heard: the Revolutionary Tribunal to be strengthened; four courts to sit instead of two; "formalities" to be suppressed, such as the preliminary inquiry, the examination in court, the hearing of witnesses, the defence; only one penalty to be inflicted—death; sentence of death to be passed on mere proof of identity; the denouncing of *suspects* to be obligatory upon all citizens. And who were *suspects*? "Those who shall have sought to dissolve or discredit the National Convention; those who shall have abused the principles of the Revolution; those who shall have spread false news, led public opinion astray, prevented the instruction of the people, perverted morals or corrupted the conscience of the public; finally, those who, by any means whatever, shall attack the liberty, unity, or safety of the Republic, or shall have retarded its consolidation. . . ." Everyone, in short! And Couthon read out the list of those who were entrusted with the summary and murderous business; five substitutes, twelve judges, and fifty jurymen, among whom figured the whole of Robespierre's gang: Dumas, Vilate, Coffinhal, Duplay, his cousin Laviron, the Graviers, the Garnier-Lunays, the printer Nicolas, Didiée the locksmith, Lohier the grocer, Villers (recommended by Saint-Just), Desboisseaux the sabot-maker, Chrétien the coffee-house keeper, Gamey the wigmaker, and many, many others for whom he had craftily found employment in this death-factory, which their presence turned into his kingdom and his tool. . . .¹ The reading being ended, a crushing silence

weighed upon the horrorstruck Assembly, in which one voice, and one only, was raised : the voice of Ruamps, who gave utterance to the universal feeling by saying : " If the bill passes I shall blow out my brains ! " This gave courage to others. Lecointre demanded an adjournment ; but Robespierre had already left his chair and mounted the tribune to insist on the measure being carried through there and then. He issued his orders. " The Convention must sit until nine o'clock in the evening, if necessary . . ." The cowardly applauded, and Couthon began a second reading of the twenty-two clauses, but was interrupted by a few menacing words from Robespierre as trenchant as the executioner's knife. The horrible law was passed ; and immediately the re-appointment of the Committee of Public Safety was put to the vote and its powers renewed without opposition. The Convention offered itself as a holocaust to the tyrant it longed to crush.

Many writers have told the story of the days that followed : the agonised whispering in the passages of the palace ; the terrifying revelation that the murderous law was not the work of the Committees, but had been drawn up by Robespierre alone,¹ in his impatience to chastise his insolent colleagues for their mocking and insulting words at the Fête of the Supreme Being ; the conviction they all felt that the knife was hanging over them, for the new law tacitly abolished the preliminary decree that had hitherto been necessary before members of the Assembly could be tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal. It was that, above all, that alarmed them. They would have delivered the country, without saying a word, into the hands of the man before whom they trembled ; but to deliver themselves into his hands was a sacrifice indeed ! Nor was there any possibility of flight ; " no private business," was his decree. If they had only known how many heads he wanted ! They made calculations ; they

enumerated the names of his open enemies ; every man was ready to hand over his neighbour to him ; but as Moloch persisted in mentioning no one, they all felt themselves in danger. Barère, "in a terrible state of dejection," said to Vilate : "That man Robespierre is insatiable ; if he talked to us about Thuriot, Guffroy, Panis, Rovère, Cambon . . . we should know where we were ; if he asked for Tallien, too, and Bourdon de l'Oise, and Legendre, and Fréron, well and good. . . . But Audouin and Léonard Bourdon and Vadier and Voulland—it is impossible to consent to that."¹

On the 23rd, Robespierre being absent from the Convention, Bourdon de l'Oise, who had reasons for believing himself threatened, expressed in veiled terms the fear that filled them all : "Let us decree," he said, "that any of the people's representatives who may be arrested shall not be brought before the tribunal unless the accusatory decree shall have been passed by the Convention itself." Merlin, of Douai, brought forward a preamble to that effect, asserting the inalienable right of the Assembly alone to bring its own members to trial.² His proposal was at once adopted. This was to a certain extent reassuring ; but the next day the terrible master was there and his comrade Couthon with him. The latter, in his most honeyed and aggrieved manner, courteously protested against "the calumnies" of the previous day. Threaten the Convention ! Try to shackle it ! What an unworthy thought ! Only an evilly-disposed citizen could have made so insulting and so impolitic an accusation. Prolonged applause followed these words, and Bourdon, the guilty man, made eager apologies. "I esteem Couthon ; I esteem the Committee ; I esteem the unshakable Mountain that has rescued liberty !" No one dared, under the despot's eye, to fail in adulation and self-abasement. For this time Robespierre was presiding. From his raised chair he scrutinised the

benches through his great spectacles, and every man felt it might be himself on whom that searching gaze was fixed. He gave particular attention to Bourdon de l'Oise, who had been one of the detractors at the fête. Without mentioning any name he stung and spurred him, knowing well enough that he would cry out when he was pricked. He spoke of "those intriguers, more despicable than the others because they are more hypocritical," who led the Convention astray and vilified the Committee. And Bourdon did not fail to cry out. "I demand that statements should be proved. . . . It has just been said pretty clearly that I am a villain. . . ." Then, in a voice that was harsh with anger, a voice that made men's blood run cold, Robespierre replied: "I have named no one; woe to him who names himself. . . ." Some voices cried: "Give the names!" "I shall give the name when necessary," was the inscrutable answer; and this threat, which was all the more alarming that it was impersonal, reduced the Convention once more to a state of subjection. Merlin's insulting preamble was revoked, and the sitting ended "amid the most enthusiastic applause."¹

These words of Robespierre mark the beginning of the worst period of terror. It was quite plain that the Assembly, being from this moment altogether prostrate, would deliver up to its conqueror as many of its members as he asked for. Why did he not name them? They would have been his on the spot. Life thenceforward was no longer life; the most thoughtless were crushed by the haunting fear of being waked in the night by the commissioners of the Committee, taken to the Conciergerie, tried at noon, and executed at four o'clock, without being able to utter a word or to make any appeal to a friend. It was during these days that children in their homes were bidden to make no sound, while their elders listened to the footsteps of a

patrol in the street ; the family would sit motionless till the knocker of some neighbour's door was heard rapping ; then everyone would fall to guessing, and, as the patrol passed on, would say : " That's all for this evening ! " During the day the only way of overcoming the fever of anxiety and escaping the tormenting nightmare was by constant movement, constant excitement ; the number of public amusements increased, and the popularity of certain theatres—that of the Vaudeville among others—began during this terrible time.¹ The case of the deputies was worse than any ; many of them no longer slept in their beds² ; they attended the sittings to keep an eye on the turn of affairs ; but so as not to attract attention they often changed their seat, thinking by that means to keep spies off the scent and to remain on good terms with everyone. The most cautious never sat down at all, but stood at the foot of the tribune, ready to slip furtively out of the hall in case of danger. On one occasion a member of the Convention, who was leaning his head on his hand, thought that " the dictator was looking at him and changed his attitude quickly, trembling and stammering : " He will imagine I'm thinking of something ! "³ In spite of this terror that held them all in its grip, " it was necessary to exhibit a kind of joy unless one wished to run the risk of dying ; at the least an air of contentment, an air of frankness was required . . . very much as it was in the days of Nero."⁴ There were those who, like Mailhe, preferred not to appear at all, and spent the day striding rapidly along the Avenue de Neuilly or among the thickets of the Bois de Boulogne.⁵ " I spoke to some of my colleagues who were also my friends," writes one of them, " of a personal project that could not be carried out in less than a month, and they laughed very much at my presumption in counting on another month of life. . . ." ⁶

The miniature-painters had more orders than they could carry out; for everyone who felt certain of dying before long was anxious at least to leave a portrait to his family,¹ and it was usual, from motives of prudence, to be painted in the dress of a *sans-culotte*. Omer Granet, who had an income of 100,000 francs and was afterwards Mayor of Marseilles under Napoleon, was always armed when he went out "with a gnarled stick as thick as a man's arm, and dressed himself to correspond in the most *sans-culottish* way that anyone could imagine"; he called himself "the seditious Granet"; and the future Comte Thibaudeau, dressed in a jacket made of bed-ticking, "was in the habit, when he was speaking, of leaning with his two hands on the said Granet's shoulders, to make it plain that he was even more 'seditious' than his colleague."² The shoemaker Chalandon, a member of the revolutionary committee of the Section de l'Homme Armé, supplied the deputy every day with a jug of *orgeat* "to safeguard him against the poison with which he was threatened";³ and there even came a time when a dozen members of the Convention, having reached the limits of their endurance, banded themselves together to kill the tyrant Robespierre with a dagger at the foot of the tribune, since the mere sight of him froze them with fear. Yet, though no straw of hope was felt to be too small to snatch at, when the ever-jesting Vadier tried to put courage into his colleagues with whispered jokes about the grand miracle he was preparing to work with the help of the *Mère de Dieu*, they merely shrugged their shoulders. His roguish winks, his knowing airs, his self-satisfied, re-assuring grimaces, his allusions to the seven seals of the Holy Spirit and the seven gifts of the New Eve no longer roused the least curiosity or interest, and his half-confidences were taken no more seriously than the "sixty years of virtue" of which he was so fond of bragging.

Ever since the day that Héron and Sénar had wormed their way into Catherine Théot's lodging to arrest that visionary and her disciples, Vadier had been untiringly giving his best attention to the curious business. The sleuth-hounds of the Committee of General Security were on the hunt for evidence that would give the affair the appearance of a great political conspiracy and would at the same time make it seem like a caricature of the form of worship inaugurated by Robespierre. Héron and Sénar directed the search. Their first move in the investigation was to visit, at No. 6, Rue des Postes, the rooms of the ex-Carthusian Dom Gerle, who was brought from prison for the occasion, and awaited them with a guard of several *sans-culottes*. All his papers were carefully examined, and he was obliged by Héron to give explanations of any that seemed suspicious—a humiliating position for the misguided priest, who must have remembered the days when his faith burned brightly and he was the head of a famous abbey, while these two ironical and brutal detectives were confronting him with the written evidence of his degrading aberrations. He was asked to explain, among other documents, "a paper divided into three columns relating to the establishment of a deity in Paris," a deity who promised immortality of the soul and body to all believers. The ex-monk, looking very sheepish, only answered "that he was very far from any such ideas when he put these things together." They then showed him a note addressed to himself, containing these words: "O Gerle, dear son Gerle, beloved of God, worthy of the Lord's love; heaven, in exalting you, made sweetness itself. . . . It is on your head, on that calm forehead that the diadem shall be placed. . . . Live for ever as a dear brother in the hearts of your two little sisters. . . . Come, dear well-beloved brother, and spend the afternoon of Wednesday, at about half-

past four ; your two little sisters and your friends await you." Then they showed him another in the same writing : " Gerle, Gerle, dear son Gerle, your two little sisters beg you to come to-morrow, Décadi, to breakfast with them at half-past nine, no earlier and no later." And a third in which " his two doves beg him to meet them at the Luxembourg." When Héron sarcastically wished to know the names of these two doves, Gerle explained, with much embarrassment, that " these affectionate forms of speech expressed nothing but tenderness and esteem " ; the two young women were sisters, and lived together in the Rue Dominique-d'Enfer, No. 7. One of them was called Rose ; she was the pretty girl whom the agents of the Committee had heard singing in Catherine Théot's room, the girl known as the Dove.¹ He stoutly declared that the three letters " related only to spiritual ideas," and the police-agent took notes of the *billets-doux* and the commentaries of the monk, which might provide Vadier with comic effects. Then he went on to the more important documents. What, he asked, was the paper containing the words : " There appears a man with nut-brown hair, wearing a round hat with a high crown, a mouse-grey coat, a striped waistcoat, and black stockings and breeches, and with an average sort of face. . ." The prisoner protested that he had no idea ; Citoyenne Godefroy, with whom Catherine Théot lodged, had given him the paper " to read or to hand on," and Gerle had kept it in his pocket, thinking it of no importance. What, then, was this other paper, which alluded in enigmatical terms to the shock that would terrify Paris on the day when, with a flash of lightning, the earth would be changed, and all the disciples of Mother Catherine, being preserved from death, would be raised up to die no more ? To which Gerle answered that, " having no faith at all in visions of

that nature, he took no sort of interest in these dreams.”¹

At last Héron reached the “tit-bit,” a document of the first importance, so weighty and so unhopet-for that he made no mention of it in his report. He had discovered a paper written by Robespierre among Dom Gerle’s possessions! It was a certificate of civic virtue, a sort of pass, such as very few men could congratulate themselves on possessing: “I certify that Gerle, my colleague in the Constituent Assembly, has adhered to the true principles of the Revolution, and has always seemed to me, although a priest, a good patriot . . .” Here was something that would make it possible to implicate the Incorruptible in the ridiculous business of Catherine Théot, and to present him in the character of one of the New Eve’s initiates! The real facts, it is true, were simple enough. His sectional committee having refused him a *carte de sûreté*, without which no one could move about Paris, Gerle had gone to see Robespierre, with whom he had lost touch since the distant days of the Constituent Assembly. On hearing of his predicament, the Incorruptible at once gave him the precious talisman which had, since that day, kept the *ci-devant* monk in perfect safety, but which in Vadier’s hands was about to prove his undoing. Gerle had tried to see Robespierre again, in the hope of obtaining from him a clerk’s place in some government department; he often was present at “his mid-day audience,” but was only able to speak to him twice, and then only “in the presence of his hairdresser and other persons.” Ordinarily Maximilien “was not visible, though his special confidants went up to his room without being announced.”² Doubtless Gerle gave this perfectly plausible explanation to Héron, but the latter paid little attention to it, and confided it to no one but his patron Vadier, on whose behalf he also took possession

of the compromising autograph. Of Dom Gerle he asked nothing further but the names of all who had frequented the little lair of the prophetess or the salon of the Duchesse de Bourbon at Petit-Bourg, where the ex-Carthusian, like other semi-lunatics, was a welcome guest. He told all he knew. Conscious of never having conspired against the Republic, he could not foresee the use that would be made of his revelations ; and during the next few days the spies of the Committee arrested about twenty of the "illuminated," among whom were several persons of distinction. There was no need for them to trouble about the Duchesse de Bourbon, seeing that she had been imprisoned for more than a year in the Fort Saint-Jean at Marseilles ; but they locked up an old medical attendant of the House of Orléans, Quévremont de Lamotte, who was interested in somnambulism ; a *soi-disant* Marquise de Chastenay, in whose house they seized "a medal bearing the Virgin on one side, and on the other a figure of St. Michael the Archangel overcoming Lucifer" ; Miroudot, Bishop of Babylon, who had long since thrown his crozier and mitre to the dogs, and together with Talleyrand had consecrated the constitutional bishop Gobel ;¹ a man called Voisin, formerly a Franciscan monk ; Gombault, treasurer of the first division of the gendarmerie, on the grounds that he lived in the Duchesse de Bourbon's house in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré² ; and a deaf-mute named Boutelou, because he had engraved a little print, "the mere sight of which would safeguard the lives of those who should carry it during the events of the 10th August."³ The *prophet Elijah* was also arrested, the man who walked about the streets carrying "a manuscript that contained the secret of becoming invisible while killing a fellow-creature, and particularly the deputies in the Convention."⁴

And who was this Prophet Elijah ? It is difficult

to disentangle him from the crowd of visionaries of all types and all ranks whom the caprices of the police-agents bracketted together as Catherine Théot's staff. Perhaps we should identify him with a certain Pierre Guillaume Ducy, aged twenty-seven, who was a medical student, and had founded in his own dwelling in the Rue de la Tour, in the Section du Temple, a little church that had much in common with that of the Rue Contrescarpe. At the end of Prairial an inhabitant of Nanterre called Aumont was walking on Mont-Valérien, when he noticed three men whose behaviour struck him as suspicious. One of them was holding a book in his hand, and, without pausing in his walk, was reading to the others in a loud voice ; and two women, of whom one was very pretty, had joined the audience. Aumont approached the group as they walked and asked them why they were there. " We shall soon have finished," answered one of them. We must not forget that the law of the 22nd Prairial numbered espionage and denunciation among the civic virtues. Aumont was patient for some time, but at last, seeing that the reading showed no sign of coming to an end, he snatched the book from the reader's hands and ordered the whole party to go with him and give an explanation of their conduct to the Committee of Surveillance at Nanterre. The women ran away, but the three men submissively followed him—a strangely docile line of action that might lead one to think they belonged to the placid sect of Quakers. At Nanterre they gave their names and professions. One of them was Ducy, and seemed " very much wrought up " ; from his pockets were taken a note-book containing incomprehensible notes, a scapular, a mass-book, and two crucifixes. His companions were called Molard and Pauthiez ; and the latter, the servant of a *ci-devant* noble who had fled to Suresnes, was carrying " a rosary of an extraordinary

form."¹ Molard described himself as a pedlar. These two had come out together with a friend of theirs, formerly a floor-polisher, who had been seized with an epileptic fit on the way. They had met Ducy "going out to explore," and he, to cheer them up as they walked, read them some passages from the Bible. All this looked very suspicious, and the three pedestrians were despatched to the Committee of General Security, by whose orders Ducy's rooms were searched. They were found to contain "a chapel-of-ease of the Rue Contrescarpe." In one of the rooms, the windowpanes of which were "thickly smeared with white to prevent anything from being seen from the outside," a number of chairs and stools were arranged, with a raised seat in the middle for the officiating minister to occupy. There were many objects of devotion and sacred pictures, among which, in a cupboard, was a copper crucifix wrapped in a white handkerchief and adorned with flowers. A "snare" laid by the police agents resulted in the capture of a number of regular attendants at the nocturnal meetings held by Ducy. He was sent to Bicêtre himself, and the others, numbering about fifteen—among whom were the epileptic floor-polisher, an engineer employed in an arms-factory, a commissionnaire, a man in the service of Vestris the opera-dancer, and even a carpenter who was working in the house—were distributed among the various prisons of Paris. In all their homes objects "conducive to fanaticism" were seized: a representation of the Holy Spirit in ivory, reliquaries, jars containing images of "the *ci-devant* Christ" and "various things relating to the Passion"; many books of prayer or magic, such as the *Enchiridion*, "by means of which the Devil may be seen, according to the procedure sent from Italy to Charlemagne," and the *Clavicules de Solomon*, a work translated from the Hebrew by the Rabbi Aboguazar. Héron had found a copy of

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this book in Catherine Théot's room. Among many other follies it revealed the way to make an invisible sword : "Take a perfectly new sword ; having washed it with wine in which you must put a little of the blood of a dove killed on a Monday, at six o'clock in the morning, you must wait until the same hour on Tuesday, when you must take it in your hand and say these words very attentively : "*O Theos, agios, agios, agios, agios, agios, athanatos, alpha and omega, may the angels Cassiel, Sachiel, Samuel, Anaël, be faithful and obedient to me . . . Tetragrammaton . . .*"¹ "Superstition," a philosopher has said, "is the last faith of incredulous centuries."

On the 29th Prairial another arrest placed a person of quite a different kind in the hands of the Committee : the Abbé Théot, a nephew of the prophetess, and the constitutional *vicaire* of Saint-Roch. He was one of those rare and far-from-attractive revolutionary ecclesiastics who, on account of their position, took the obligations of their sacred office lightly. He was a bad priest even before '89, and being threatened with a *lettre de cachet* he left France and enlisted in the Prussian army, in which he served for three years. "Being a deserter from the standard of a tyrant," he arrived in Paris in 1790, "to join his brothers and overthrow despotism." He was one of the first to take the oath, and the constitutional bishop Gobel welcomed the black sheep among his clergy ; the Abbé Théot was appointed assistant priest at "Nicolas du Chardonnet" and afterwards at "Roch," as he himself called the parishes to which he was successively attached. Owing to the fact that the faithful held aloof from the constitutional services he had a good deal of leisure, and was sent on a mission to the department of the Hautes-Alpes to estimate the losses caused by the war to the inhabitants of Briançon. After six months' absence he returned to Paris on the

day following the Feast of the Supreme Being, armed with eloquent certificates of civic virtue and Jacobin diplomas, and other testimonials that filled him with pride ; when suddenly, just as he arrived and was feeling very hopeful about the future, he was seized by the commissioners of the Section de la Montagne, who arrested him "in the presbytery of Roch" itself, where he had a room "in the corridor of the fifth floor, looking over the street." Here no crucifix was found, nor any other object "conducive to fanaticism," but only some rules for the game of Boston, which the commissioners confiscated as suspicious-looking gibberish. As soon as he was in prison the Abbé addressed long appeals to the Committee of Security, boasting of the services he had rendered to the cause of the people and attacking his mad old aunt. It was to "that woman" that he owed all his misfortunes. When he was "vegetating in the darkness of superstition" the disputes of that demented creature with the Archbishop of Paris put an end to his ecclesiastical career, and now that he was regenerate he was suffering again from the extravagances of that ignorant woman, "whom nature had endowed with all the qualifications necessary for believing in all the nonsense that filled the lives of such women as Catherine of Sienna and Theresa." To this the Abbé, with his heart full of bitterness, appended the laical signature "*Citizen Théot.*" He was sent off to Bicêtre, where he could meditate at leisure on the disadvantages of compromising relationships.¹

Such were the diverse materials that Vadier was preparing to use to the best advantage while revelling in the thought of the deadly blow he was going to deal to Robespierre, and indirectly to all forms of superstition. The theme, in very truth, lent itself to amusing commentary ; a man of talent and wit might have developed it in a series of picturesque scenes ;

but Vadier was not Voltaire, although, in his Gascon self-satisfaction, he plainly flattered himself that in subtlety and lightness of touch he equalled the author of the *Essai sur les mœurs*. However, it behoved him to be prudent and to leave himself a way of escape in case the high-priest of the Supreme Being should take the joke amiss. Having made up his mind to throw his bomb on the 27th Prairial, Vadier made sure of a good audience by discreetly informing his comrades that the occasion would be entertaining. The Assembly on that day, therefore, was prepared to laugh, and all the more because Robespierre was not present. On the previous day, as he was crossing the anteroom of the Committee of Public Safety, with his face as gloomy and his ears as alert as usual, he had overheard Vilate saying to a knot of friends: "The Revolutionary Tribunal will make merry to-morrow over the affair of the *Mère de Dieu*." Robespierre turned to him with an air of fury: "What's that? Are you sure?" And shaking with anger, his face red as fire, he added: "Chimerical conspiracies to hide those that are real!" and passed on. Thus forewarned, he decided not to appear at the Convention on the 27th, and the president's chair was occupied by Bréard.¹

This famous sitting opened, like every other, with a series of communications gabbled by the secretaries and heard by no one else: "The Popular Society at Rivesalte states that it has celebrated, in the Temple of Reason, a fete in honour of General Dagobert...." The Temple of Reason! Rivesalte was behind the times. "The Popular Society of Stenay, Meuse, sends to the National Convention the details of the fête celebrated in this Commune on the occasion of the inauguration of a temple to Reason...." It is plain that the Supreme Being had not many worshippers in the provinces. "Citizen Dange Menonval,

actor at the theatre of Rouen, has the honour of presenting a drama entitled *Crime and Virtue; or, Admiral and Geffroi.*" "The national agent for the district of Neuville, Loiret, has the honour of presenting to the Convention a hymn that he composed ten years ago. . . ." ¹ Such was the kind of rubbish read daily in the correspondence of the assembly and lost in the noise of conversation. But at last Vadier appeared at the tribune and instantly silence fell.

At the mere sight of the long sinister face of the *Old Inquisitor*—nicknames were the fashion in the Convention — whose dashing amusements in the society of his gay friends,² and tender relations with his servant Jeanneton were perfectly well known to all present, the audience felt sure that they were not to be disappointed. Nothing is funnier than an amusing speaker with a grave face, and as soon as he had uttered his opening words the contrast between the seriousness of the orator and his terrible Gascon accent, the working of his features, and his occasional attempts at sprightliness, caused keen joy to all his colleagues. An opportunity to laugh did not often occur, and they seized it with a wholehearted delight that was almost puerile. For Vadier's report does not deserve the cheers and outbursts of prolonged laughter that are recorded by the *Moniteur*; it is a hotch-potch with no plan and no sequence of ideas, a mixture and muddle of all kinds of things, like a kaleidoscope gone mad: the King of Prussia, the tyrants of England, La Vendée, the priests, the spirit of the Revolution, Hell, Danton, Necker, the Englishman in his counting-house speculating on the follies of religion, the Orléans faction, and the villainy of Pitt.

The only joke that stands out at all consists in changing the name of Catherine Théot into *Théos—Theos*, in Greek, meaning *God*—and in founding on this transformation a number of ideas with symbolic

interpretations. Those who read the bombastic production to-day in its official form will find nothing that is applicable to Robespierre—not even an allusion to the perfectly authentic pass signed by him for Dom Gerle ; but who knows that the text was not expurgated before being handed over to the proof-readers of the *Moniteur* ? It is probable, moreover, that Vadier's speech owed its real importance to certain humorous embroideries that were secretly circulated before the meeting of the Assembly. There was a great deal of talk, for instance, though only in whispers, about a letter discovered by Héron in the mattress of the prophetess and addressed by her to Maximilien, in which she called him “ my dear son ” and a “ divine man,” and referred to him as the saviour of the world. Now this letter, which no one has ever seen, seems to have existed only in Vadier's imagination¹ ; but the facetious interpolation made it possible to apply to Robespierre all the biting comments directed against the devout worshippers of the Rue Contrescarpe. It was left to be understood that he was one of the initiates ; that the arm-chair, left empty when Gerle and Mother Catherine were enthroned in the midst of their flock, was intended for him ; and he was pictured in the act of receiving the seven symbolic kisses and lingering, like the others, “ to suck the chin of the old madwoman voluptuously.” Read thus between the lines the report assumes a double meaning and becomes really stinging. An allusion to Robespierre, who had neither wife nor mistress, can be found in the rhapsody on “ the abnegation of temporal pleasures imposed on the elect of the *Mère de Dieu*.” And an allusion to Robespierre, whose dream was the destruction of all who refused to bow down to him, lies in the prophecy of the great flash of lightning “ which shall reduce to powder all the miscreants of the world and spare only the initiates of Mother

Catherine, immortal like herself. Singing her praises they will enjoy eternally, in the earthly paradise that she will establish, the radiant glory of her venerable virginity.”¹ Vadier concluded by proposing that the woman *Théos*, Quévremont-Lamotte the doctor, Dom Gerle and others should be sent to the Revolutionary Tribunal, with an order to the public prosecutor to seek out and proceed against all concerned in this great conspiracy;² and the measure passed without discussion. The Convention gave evidence of its satisfaction by ordering that the report should be printed and sent to the troops and all the communes of the Republic, and that six copies should be given to each of its own members. No more than this had been done for Robespierre’s speech on the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul. Vadier was exultant. His buffoonery would cost the heads of a countless number of innocent persons, but he had aimed a blow at the tyrant, and Robespierre had been struck.

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It really seemed as though this covert attack had disconcerted him. He was not present, as we have seen, at the meeting of the Assembly; but in the evening he went to the Committee of Public Safety; and the public prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville, to whom Vadier had hastened to send the decree that had been passed, in order that its execution should not be delayed, arrived there also at about nine o’clock, as he did every evening as soon as he had completed his daily *batch*. He came to take his orders for the following day, bringing with him the papers relating to the Thot affair. In the anteroom he met Dumas, the presiding judge of his tribunal. The Committee was in session, and according to the official regulations no one was allowed to disturb it when at work; but

this rule was relaxed for Dumas and Fouquier, their services being indispensable. They therefore entered the hall where the meeting was in progress, and the public prosecutor laid his papers on the desk. Robespierre took them up and began to read them, whereupon his colleagues, having no desire to bear the brunt of his first angry outburst, slipped away one after the other, leaving him alone with Dumas and Fouquier. After glancing through the bundle of papers Maximilien pronounced it a silly business, and gave orders that nothing more should be done about it. Fouquier respectfully observed that, in accordance with the decree, he was obliged to bring the accused to trial ; but Robespierre silenced him and kept the papers.¹ Fouquier ran off to the Committee of General Security, which held its meetings at the other end of the palace of the Tuileries, and was awaiting him there in the hope of making arrangements for the execution of the woman Théot and her initiates. It was a great disappointment to learn from him that it was countermanded. "Why ?" he was asked. "HE, HE, HE opposes it." said Fouquier, in the exasperated tone of a man balked of a coveted prize. In the Committee of Security that evening the *Incorruptible* was the object of much abuse ; he robbed the executioner of the *illuminés*, so he must be one of them. This seemed all the more evident because on the very next day there was a far more convincing opportunity for him to show mercy ; on that day the "assassins" were tried—that is to say little Cécile Renault, who at the beginning of the month had gone to the Maison Duplay in the unfulfilled hope of being allowed to speak to him. For this crime fifty-four persons were to die, of whom not one had the least connection with Cécile except her father Renault, his son, and his sister—and even these were perfectly innocent. Associated with them was Admiral, the

man who, in default of Robespierre, had attacked Collot d'Herbois ; and the rest of the prisoners were chosen at random to swell the numbers and make the punishment of the "murderers" more impressive.

This famous trial was, in a sense, the inauguration of the summary methods of justice ordained by the new law. The accused were nominally called to give evidence, and fifty-four times the question was repeated : "Do you know anything of the conspiracy ?" Fifty-four times a negative answer was given. If one of the accused made an attempt at discussion—"Citizen President, may I remark——" he was silenced. "It is not for you to speak ! The next !" No interrogatory, no calling of witnesses, no defence. The shambles. Admiral was the only prisoner who did not deny his murderous intentions ; but he was on the stage merely as "one of the crowd," and was altogether effaced¹ by "Robespierre's murderers," among whom figured a Montmorency, the two Sombreuils, a Rohan-Rochefort, a scientist, a priest, an actress, a musician, Madame de Sainte-Amaranthe, her daughter, her son-in-law and her son, without counting the Comte de Fleury, whose name does not even appear on the bill of indictment.² They were all condemned to death on the charge of having taken part in the Foreign Conspiracy—for such was the pompous title with which the heterogeneous company was dignified—but to prevent the public from missing the truth, and to make it quite clear that these unhappy people were dying because they were concerned in the assassination of the great man, an order was sent from the Committee of Public Safety to clothe all the condemned in the red veil of parricides. Who was it who did Robespierre this bad turn ?³ Did his own diseased vanity inspire him to initiate such an ill-advised measure, or at the least to acquiesce in his victims being likened to the regicides of the past ?

The order has been regarded by some as a manœuvre on the part of his enemies, but he could very easily have frustrated it. Since he claimed the right of showing mercy to Catherine Théot and her disciples, why did he not protest against the hecatomb of his so-called murderers? However that may be, the result was disastrous to himself. It was necessary to delay the victims' departure to the scaffold while their death-livery¹ was hastily manufactured out of coarse red cloth; and when the long procession of carts, escorted by *gendsarmes* and artillerymen, set out through the streets to the Barrière de Vincennes, where the scaffold was erected, the people watched them pass in silence and consternation. So many victims for the sake of one man! And what victims they were! An old man of seventy-five,² a youth of seventeen,³ a young woman of nineteen,⁴ a little work-girl of eighteen,⁵ and the heroine of the odious drama, Cécile Renault, who was not twenty years old. "The fragment of red material that draped their shoulders emphasised the brilliancy of their complexions" and the youthfulness of their features; the immense crowd that thronged the streets through which they passed gazed at them in bewilderment. They looked so beautiful that soon afterwards all the women of fashion were wearing red shawls.⁶

The good sense of the Parisian people now perceived for the first time a revolting disproportion between the insignificance of the crime and the ghastly magnitude of the punishment. Robespierre's dignity, far from being enhanced by this incident, seemed to be impaired. In the eyes of his colleagues, who saw him daily and at close quarters, his artificial prestige had already been falling to pieces for a long time, and he was too irritable and too observant not to be conscious of it himself. He could estimate the number

of his enemies in the Convention by the success of Vadier's insolent report on the *Mère de Dieu*; they were unmasked in a body by that production. At the Committee of Public Safety matters were still worse; with the exception of Saint-Just, who spent the greater part of his time away from Paris, and of the infirm Couthon, who never attended the evening sittings, Robespierre had no supporters. He was despised by Carnot, who thought him "ridiculous" and kept him at a distance; while Billaud-Varenne, a "powerful orator," and Collot d'Herbois, an indifferent actor addicted to ranting, scented a dictator in him, and with their rough methods alarmed his cat-like caution. He was jealous of Barère, who was too attractive, too subtle, too sharp, too much of a "good fellow," and flattered and deceived him. The industrious Prieur and honest Lindet regarded him with contempt. The debates of these six men were venomous indeed. They spied on one another, laid traps, became frankly abusive, and for the merest trifles threatened each other with the scaffold.¹ One day the discussion became so lively that Robespierre fainted from exhaustion²; and on the 23rd Prairial, when Billaud burst out into a virulent attack on Robespierre for initiating the terrible law of the 22nd without first submitting it, as was the custom, to the Committee, they shouted at each other so vociferously that a crowd began to collect on the terrace of the Tuileries. It was necessary to shut the windows and carry on the debate in more subdued tones.

Among all the documents, memoirs, narratives, pamphlets, and written vindications that the survivors of that tragic epoch have bequeathed to us, there is not a page that gives us any clear information on the topography of the Committee of Public Safety; not a single contemporary took the time to describe those rooms in which, for more than three years, the

Revolution seethed. Those who entered them, whether daily or only incidentally, were too much absorbed, too feverish, too full of emotion, to pay any attention to the actual scene in that redoubtable place, of which not a stone is left standing to-day. The Committee of Public Safety was installed in the spring of 1793 in those rooms of the Tuileries that had formerly been occupied by Marie-Antoinette. It was reached by a great stone staircase, the foot of which was in a wide porch that could be entered by carriages and was approached, from the side of the Carrousel, by two arcades, at the angle formed by the main body of the palace and the gallery running parallel with the water. This staircase connected the rooms of the ground-floor with those of the first storey, and continued to the top of the building.¹

The Committee of Public Safety was established on the ground-floor, where Louis XIV. had once lived, and where traces of his magnificence were still to be seen. From the first landing of the staircase, at a height of about fifteen steps from the ground, a door opened into a huge anteroom, on the ceiling of which was a painting by Nicolas Mignard² of Apollo receiving Minerva, followed by the four quarters of the earth. Beyond this was a second salon, which in the time of Marie-Antoinette had been the billiard-room; and beyond that again were the reception-room and the Queen's bedroom. Four pillars were at the corners of the alcove in which the bed had once stood; and it has been asserted that these pillars were hollow, each of them being "capable of hiding a person."³ On the ceiling hovered Night in a mantle studded with stars, carrying in her arms two children who were meant to represent dreams.⁴ Opening out of this was the Queen's dressing-room. These five rooms had high windows with rounded tops, and looked out on the garden: rectangular windows lighted the three

that lay beyond, namely the closet “in which the King’s linen was stored,” the workshop in which Louis XVI. made locks,¹ and his private study.² A long passage with no windows separated the Queen’s suite of rooms from that of the Dauphin, which looked out on the court of the palace ; and from this passage a narrow staircase formerly led to the rooms occupied by Louis XVI. on the first floor.

When the Committee of Public Safety took possession of the Queen’s suite on the ground-floor on the morning of the 7th April, 1793,³ they camped there as best they could. The workmen were still engaged on the installation of the Convention, which was unable to meet in the Tuileries until a month later. The room “with the pillars,” that is to say, Marie-Antoinette’s bedroom, was chosen as the committee hall. A table and some chairs were placed in it ; but when Robespierre joined the Committee in July he began drilling his colleagues at once, and drew up a set of strict rules, which may still be seen among the Archives, bearing his minute signature : “Every member must have a private table, and must be surrounded by secretaries and agents worthy of his confidence ; every member must have a place set apart in which he can work and have all the material surroundings conducive to action . . . ; the Committee must sit with closed doors and be inaccessible except in very extraordinary cases, and must have officials to see that this rule is carried out ; the Committee must discuss nothing in the presence of a stranger,”⁴ etc. Great was the commotion that followed ! Incited by the despot, the Committee enlarged its borders to an unexpected extent : it soon encroached upon the Dauphin’s former rooms, whence the Colonial Committee was expelled ; then it reached the *entresols*, then the King’s rooms, then the Pavillon de Flore,⁵ and finally even the houses of the Carrousel.

The number of its secretaries and clerks, its police-agents and couriers increased every day. It was necessary to heat, light, and furnish this great place, moreover; and commands and invectives poured into the department of the Garde Meuble, whose officials tried to cope with the most urgent orders by ransacking shops, and the palaces of those who had been on the abolished Civil List, and the houses of rich émigrés.¹ A list of some of the articles supplied will give an idea of the extent, even at the beginning, of this formidable Revolution-factory: twelve completely furnished truckle-beds, twenty-four small bedsteads (completely furnished), fifty pairs of sheets, twenty-four dozen coarse table-napkins, six hundred pairs of candlesticks, a thousand chairs (half of them being upholstered and half straw-bottomed), three hundred tables and desks of different kinds, fifty candlesticks with shades, a hundred little writing-tables, fifty walnut-wood writing-desks, etc., etc.² And if it is only with the help of inventories that we can picture the appearance of this furnace that was kept burning day and night, those cold documents certainly enable us to form a fairly accurate idea of the arrangement of the famous place and to glean some details that are not without value.

It was well guarded. There was a guardhouse at the entrance in the courtyard and another under the gallery on the side facing the garden, and some artillerymen in the ante-rooms. In these rooms, where petitioners waited and there was a constant stream of people passing in and out, the furniture was very simple: cotton curtains, and benches covered with embossed velvet, either yellow or striped with saffron and crimson.³ The Queen's billiard-room became the first secretary's office, the reception-room the second secretary's office; in it citizens were received when they came to interview members of the Com-

mittee, and here, too, were cotton curtains and benches —republican austerity. In the room with the pillars, where the Committee held its sittings, there was an air of greater elegance; for it had not only kept its dainty wainscotting, but had been furnished with twenty-four chairs with rounded backs and fluted feet, painted white and covered with blue-and-white Utrecht velvet, and twelve straw-bottomed chairs with straight backs. From Nicolas Mignard's fine ceiling hung a chandelier of six lights made of copper-gilt and Bohemian glass; and beneath it stood a large mahogany table with sockets and capitals of gilded bronze. The table was lengthened to the full extent of "all its leaves," and it was no doubt round it that the members of the Committee sat when they were reinforced by their colleagues of the Committee of General Security. Among the contents of the other rooms we find mentioned a safe for which Carnot and Prieur had applied,¹ probably for storing papers connected with the army and the movements of the troops; and some mahogany chairs with lyre-shaped backs and seats covered with yellow morocco-leather; and some other chairs with backs shaped like wheat-sheaves and covers of crimson silk-velvet. But it was for their private apartments that the members of the Committee made the most exacting demands. Among the portfolios of the *Garde Meuble*² there is a detailed and descriptive inventory of luxurious furniture supplied to the Committee of Public Safety, a lengthy list of handsome chandeliers, sumptuous inlaid bureaux, bronzes, mirrors, valuable carpets, and curtains of taffetas or the silk called *gros de Tours*, which were not intended, we may be sure, for the employés, and still less for the rooms to which the public were admitted. Of Robespierre's private office we know nothing, except that it was situated in a place apart, and that no one set foot in it"; he could reach it "without meeting a single

person," and on the many days when his mood was not sociable "he made a point of passing through the Committee Hall after the sitting was over."¹ On the subject of Billaud-Varenne's personal surroundings we are better informed. The savage democrat had the use of "a large rosewood bureau in the Buhl style, six feet long, with ornaments, mountings and sockets of bronze, all covered with ormolu . . . and of another bureau of mahogany ornamented with gilt bronzes, and of a carpet of blue-and-white stamped velvet, and of a bed. . . ."

Ah—those beds! The description of them is eloquent. At least seven members of the Committee made their fixed homes in the palace of the kings, for the Garde Meuble supplied that number of complete beds "with four pillars, furnished with their draperies of crimson damask bordered with silk galloon," or else "of green-and-white striped *fleuret*," a coarse kind of silk, with "an under-mattress of ticking and horsehair, two mattresses of wool and fustian, a bolster, a feather mattress, two blankets of white wool,"² etc. Saint-Just—who, in the outline of *Civil and Moral Institutions* he wrote for the education of young citizens, ordained that they were to "lie on matting and sleep eight hours,"³—Saint-Just had a bed that must have been particularly dainty and soft. Perhaps it was for him that the fine sheets known as *draps de seigneur*⁴ were applied for in the month of Nivôse. It was not on matting that he slept, in any case, for we find Barère appealing to the Minister of the Interior to secure him a "bed like that of Citizen Saint-Just," and the Keeper of the Garde-Meuble received orders to make every effort to satisfy him.⁵

Indeed, if the other committees were rather neglected—in some cases to such a point that the feelings of the Committee of Petitions and Correspondence were greatly outraged by the wallpaper that

decorated their office, and “offended their eyes”¹ with its fleurs-de-lys and its everlasting repetition of the word *king*—the Committee of Public Safety denied itself nothing. Its coach-houses and stables² were well equipped, with a carriage to hold four,³ “for the various errands that may be necessary, which is used every day”; a berlin with a sufficient number of horses; and seven good riding-horses,⁴ besides “two horses kept for the use of the paralytic Couthon.”⁵ The existence of this stud gives colour to a rumour that was current at that time that Robespierre, with every attempt at secrecy, was taking riding-lessons in the Parc Monceau, with no very encouraging result. We know from a police-report⁶ that Saint-Just had become a horseman, and rode every day in the Bois de Boulogne.

This brief attempt to see the Committee of Public Safety at close quarters may perhaps make it easier to understand certain episodes of which little has been heard, or over which a veil may have been deliberately thrown in contemporary records. The members of the government committees were very careful to keep their dissensions secret: every time that one of them spoke in the Convention he boasted of the touching agreement that marked their deliberations, and of the perfect union that existed between the Committees of Public Safety and General Security. To this farce they owed their monthly renewal of office and, in consequence, their continued importance. It was useless, however, for them to delude themselves: a rupture was imminent, and the few who had not altogether lost their composure were already able to diagnose its symptoms.

Among these was Payan, one of Robespierre’s most ardent supporters. He had formerly been an artillery officer, had resigned his commission in 1790, and in 1793 had been appointed Administrator of the

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department of La Drôme. In that capacity he had been sent on a mission to Paris, where Robespierre, having taken a fancy to him, put him in Chaumette's place and made him a national agent of the Commune. Payan was a man of good family, easy circumstances, and attractive appearance, and was intelligent and active, but he was blinded by his worship of Maximilien, whom he did his utmost to surpass in Jacobinism. In Germinal he had prohibited the acting of Chénier's *Timoléon*, a tragedy in which "honest kings and moderate republicans" are brought upon the stage. "A fine lesson to put before the people!" he wrote indignantly; "fine examples to give them!"¹ Now, at the beginning of Messidor, Payan wrote a confidential letter to Robespierre, adjuring him not to treat the affair of the *Mère de Dieu* too lightly. He laid stress on the evident hostility of Vadier and the whole Committee of General Security, who, "either through jealousy or the pettiness of the men composing it, wished to unveil a conspiracy, but only produced a ridiculous farce that would be disastrous to the country. Some day, perhaps," he added, "we shall discover that this report was the outcome of a counter-revolutionary intrigue." It was necessary, however, "to sound the depths of the abyss that has to be filled up, rather than avoid it with a cowardly respect that must be fatal to the country." He then exhorts the Incorruptible to retort to Vadier's facetiousness with an impressive and resolute report, unmasking all the conspirators and making it plain to the whole of France "that an infamous death awaits those who do not support the revolutionary government." To be quit as soon as possible of all opposition, whether avowed or latent—that is the sovereign remedy. "You could not choose more favourable circumstances for striking: *Work on a large scale!*"²

The advice was more opportune than soothing, and

Robespierre was so well aware of its wisdom that he had already forestalled it by demanding of the Committee of Public Safety the heads of a certain number of Conventionists ; those of Tallien, Bourdon de l'Oise, Fouché, Dubois-Crancé, and "a few others." His request was evaded ; but Billaud-Varenne, in the name of the others, refused point-blank. Robespierre, greatly affronted, left the hall in a huff. He was huffy with his colleagues, just as he had been huffy in the old days at Louis-le-Grand with his schoolfellows, and as he had been huffy, too, with the Academy of Arras and with his fellow-barristers on the Council of Artois ! "Save the country without me !" he cried.¹

Though he left the Committee, he did not resign from it, for indignant pride was not his line ; his determination was of the evasive and indirect kind. For the future he would confine himself to the second floor of the Tuileries,² to that bureau of police which had been originally created to supervise government officials, but of which he had extended the functions till they encroached on those of the Committee of General Security. Saint-Just was at the head of this department ; but Saint-Just was away on a mission, and Robespierre did not disdain to fill his post. In the first place he liked the work. With the help of the popular committees, who drew up lists of *suspects* for him, he read and annotated, and conferred with Payan the national agent, and Lescot-Fleuriot, Mayor of Paris, who were both entirely devoted to him. He received visits from Dumas, the president of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and Fouquier-Tinville the Public Prosecutor : and all these men were eager to please him and never contradicted him. A gendarme was always posted at the door of his office.³ The members of the Committee, who saw him no more, knew "that he lived up there with the members of the Tribunal,"⁴ and Carnot, to whom that work was repugnant,

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declared "that he would sign no more documents that came from that Sanhedrin,"¹ into whose presence no one ventured.

At five o'clock, when his colleagues had closed their sitting, Robespierre went downstairs and crossed the committee-hall, where he paused to write a few signatures, for he professed not to be really absent except during unimportant discussions.² He thus secured for himself a way of escape in case the others should take advantage of his absence to rid themselves of him, for any member of a committee who absented himself for three days without a valid excuse was liable to have his place filled.³ In the meantime Robespierre appeared at least twice at plenary sittings, that is to say on those occasions when the Committee of Public Safety and the Committee of General Security held a meeting together.

What a pity it is that it either did not occur, or did not seem desirable, to any of the witnesses who survived, to give posterity an impartial account of these meetings concerning which history must for ever remain in the dark! All that we know of them is contained in pamphlets or memoirs by men who were not present at them, or in legal documents relating to those who took an active part in them—second-hand narratives that were often inspired by spite or a spirit of apology. Yet Robert Lindet, Carnot, Billaud-Varenne, Collot d'Herbois, Barère, Prieur, David, Vadier, Amar and others must have known that when they were gone there would be no one left who could bequeath to us a really life-like account of these memorable scenes, which the imagination of the student pictures as so terrible and so impressive. Were they not, then, so impressive in the eyes of those who saw them? Were all their memories of them merely commonplace and sordid? Were they ashamed to say those words, "I was there, this thing happened to me,"

before which all historical methods grow pale, and the most learned compilations are of no account? In default of such undeniable evidence we must content ourselves with less authoritative accounts: that of the Conventionist Baudot, for instance, who shows us Robespierre and Saint-Just arriving at the Committee one evening, having waited till it was late—till “the sepulchral hour”—because they knew “that hard blows should be dealt in darkness.” Suddenly Robespierre made an audacious attack upon Carnot, reproaching him for lack of skill in his plans of campaign, and daring to say that the man to whose organisation our victories were due was in league with the enemies of the Republic. Controlling his indignation the great Carnot covered his face with his hands, and tears of rage were seen flowing between his fingers.¹ And now, if we refer to Barras,² we shall see Robespierre returning to the subject of the heads he covets: his list has swelled: he reads it: it is coldly received: the Committee refuses to “attack” the Assembly. Robespierre rises and goes to the door: on opening it he sees in the anteroom a great number of people, among whom are several deputies—some of those, perhaps, whose death he is trying to compass. He recoils, startled, and turning to his colleagues, who are still seated round the great table, cries aloud that all may hear: “You want to decimate the Convention: I will never consent to it!” Collot d’Herbois springs from his chair, furious at this duplicity: he dashes at Robespierre, seizes him roughly by his coat and drags at him to force him back into the room, bawling at the top of his voice to the people in the anteroom: “Robespierre is a blackguard and a hypocrite! He is saddling us with his own guilt. We love all our colleagues; it is that man who would like to murder them all.” Holding his enemy by the collar he gives him a shake: then they are separated, and through

the horror-stricken crowd Robespierre slips away. "He was trembling as he walked," adds Barras, who walked with him for part of his way home; "he looked at me in an uncertain sort of way, with eyes that seemed to be thanking me for having rescued him, but at the same time reproaching me for having seen him in such a humiliating position. . . ."

In the *Memoirs of Barère*—who, though an eyewitness, was biased, and had excellent reasons for being so—we read of another day, when the two Committees were holding a combined meeting and Maximilien stubbornly demanded "the establishment of four revolutionary tribunals."¹ He was allowed to speak, but when he had ended a member asked if no one had any other proposition to put forward. Saint-Just then took up the tale, and drew a sinister picture of the existing state of things, which he considered to have reached a climax. The only means of salvation, he said, was the concentration of authority and a spirit of unity in governmental measures. . . . He was asked to state definitely what aim he had in making these complaints. Then, with the arrogant apathy that was characteristic of him, he proposed to name a dictator, a man who had the advantage of being trusted by the people, a citizen who was virtuous and *incorruptible*. "That man," he concluded, "is Robespierre. He alone can save the State. I demand that he shall be invested with the supreme power and that the two Committees shall lay the proposition before the Convention to-morrow." The suggestion was greeted with protests and sneers—and at this point we may turn to the narrative of another witness, who is anonymous but seems to have kept his eyes open.² "While Saint-Just's speech was in progress," he says, "Robespierre was walking round and round the table, puffing out his cheeks and breathing in jerks: everything showed how much his mind was agitated. He

pretended to be greatly surprised : ‘ Who put that suggestion into your head, Saint-Just ? A dictatorship is necessary for France ; I think so as much as you ; but there are many members of the Convention who deserve to be elected to that post more than I do . . . ’ Couthon, in his dulcet tones, supported Saint-Just’s motion, but the Committee gave no more than a contemptuous hearing to the singular proposition. Saint-Just made a note of each man’s words as he gave his opinion.’’ The *dictator’s* supporters, to their shame and chagrin, were routed, and the list that Robespierre had been carrying about in his pocket for nearly a month, the list of doomed heads, was probably longer by several names at the end of that day.

Dictator ! That he had dreams of such power is possible and even probable : his high opinion of himself made him really believe that the deplorable state of the country was due to nothing but the negligence and incapacity and corruption of the men who stood in his way and tied his hands. If he were the sole master France would be a paradise. And had not Rousseau, whose disciple he was, written in the *Contrat Social* : “ If the danger be such that the machinery of the law is an obstacle in the way of safety, then a supreme leader must be elected who shall overrule the laws and for the moment suspend their sovereign authority ” ? It is plain that Robespierre had meditated on this maxim, for among the papers that were found later on in his rooms was a *Note on Essentials* in his own handwriting, beginning with the words : “ *It is necessary to have one will alone.* ” Such was the opinion, after three years of experience, of the most famous democrat that ever lived ! And Saint-Just, with whose ideas and projects he was in perfect agreement, laid down this precept in his very obscure *Institutions* : “ In every revolution it is needful to have

a dictator to save the State by force, or censors to save it by virtue.”¹ But even if Robespierre’s ambition really aspired to a dictatorship, that he should suggest to his enemies to bestow it on him and thereby deliver themselves into his hands seems to show a degree of simplicity that is quite bewildering. What hope had he of winning for this mad scheme the support of Carnot, whom he had so lately insulted, or of Collot, who had seized him by the throat, or of Vadier, who had not forgiven the loss of his “batch”—his fine batch of heads, the grand show he had counted on exhibiting to the Parisian mob, of the *Mère de Dieu* dying on the scaffold, with an ex-monk whom Robespierre had protected, and the whole flock to whom she had promised physical immortality? And if Robespierre offered himself as a candidate for the dictatorship, why was he not immediately arrested? Every day people were being imprisoned for less serious crimes: the records of the popular committees give reasons for suspicion that would be laughable if the guillotine were not in the background: “*An egoist.*” —“*Has kept in his house some cups with portraits of Necker and the tyrant.*”—“*Does not believe in the benefits of the Revolution.*”—“*Only visits gentle-people.*”² And yet Robespierre aspired to the dictatorship and repudiated all the labour and achievements of three years with absolute impunity! It is difficult to believe. Was he, then, above the law? The men in whose presence he unmasked himself so imprudently had taken his measure during the many months of their association with him; they knew his meannesses, his jealousy, his unsociability, his quarrelsome and suspicious nature; and yet they proclaimed him unassailable! They had pushed him up higher and higher that his unnatural height might serve as a prop for themselves, and they had ended by hoisting him so high that they could not touch him; but on the

pedestal they had so rashly set up for him he was no longer, as draughtsmen say, "in scale"; he looked very insignificant up there, and all his old ineptitude once more became apparent to them. A certain thinker has said: "One should never touch idols; the gilding comes off on one's hands." The idol of the Revolution, on whom not a scrap of gilding was left, was now out of reach, and was directing against his renegade worshippers the thunderbolts with which they had armed him.

In the Jacobin Club, surrounded by his faithful devotees, he sounded the alarm. Here he was quite at home: the Duplay family had reserved seats, as the royal family had formerly had their own box in the theatres.¹ He posed as a martyr; and in his certainty of conquest he uttered threats: "Crime is plotting in the dark to ruin liberty! . . . A multitude of rascals and agents of foreign countries are secretly hatching a conspiracy to slander and persecute well-intentioned persons. . . . Attempts are being made to invest the defenders of the Republic with a cloak of apparent injustice and cruelty. . . . Certain patriots who desire to avenge the cause of liberty and establish it firmly are perpetually obstructed in their activities by the slanders that represent them to the people as redoubtable and dangerous men."² By crime and rascals and agents of foreign countries and slanderers he meant the Committees and the Convention. The well-intentioned people, and the defenders of liberty, and the patriots were himself. For he sang only one tune, and only spoke—always by insinuation—to advertise his own merits and to execrate those who did not admire him. He never named them: his anathemas covered a larger number of enemies by remaining impersonal. "In London I am denounced as a dictator: these calumnies are repeated in Paris; you would shudder if I were to tell you in what place!"

This remark was aimed at the Committee of Public Safety, of whose dissensions the public at large knew nothing, though their existence was suspected by the Convention. But Robespierre had thrown discretion to the winds. "What would you say if I were to tell you that these atrocities did not seem revolting to men invested with a sacred character; that even among our own colleagues there were some who have spread them abroad!" Happily, the Supreme Being watched over him. "Providence had the goodness to snatch me from the hands of the assassins"—this was intended for poor little Cécile Renault—"that I might usefully employ the moments that are still left to me. . . ." And to sound the alarm more clearly he insinuated that his wicked enemies were intending to expel him from the Committee. "If I should be forced to renounce a portion of the functions that I now discharge the character of a representative of the people would still be left to me, and I should carry on a war to the death against tyrants and conspirators."¹

That such words could be uttered, that a member of the government should thus have dared to preach revolt, and should have done so with impunity, shows very plainly from what quarter the wind of the Terror was blowing. According to a paradox that is current in these days Robespierre's fall was brought about by his efforts to pull down the scaffold: it was his clemency that ruined him. But to the last day of his life, a day that was now very near, he never ceased to extol and to perfect the beneficent institution of the Revolutionary Tribunal, which was entirely manned by his own creatures and which he supervised and directed himself. Ever since he had held aloof from the Committee and had given all his attention to the bureau of police the number of executions had increased tenfold. During this month of Messidor, with the help of his fellow-countryman Hermann, whom he

had made Commissary of the Civil Administration of Police and Tribunals, he was occupied in *emptying* the prisons, and Fouquier was obliged to refuse the work.¹ And yet Robespierre was not ferocious after the manner of Carrier and Lebon : he had a horror of blood : his nervous impressionability led him to shun all tragic sights : he was not visible on the 10th August nor at the September Massacres : it is doubtful whether he even once went, like so many others, to the square hard by his own lodging to see an execution. We are told that on the day when Louis XVI. was to go to the scaffold Robespierre advised Duplay to keep the house-door shut, and that when Éléonore Duplay asked the reason for this precaution he answered : "Ah ! it is because something you ought not to see is going to pass the door of your father's house to-day."² These inconsistencies are certainly surprising, and it is owing to them that he has been exonerated from certain crimes, and that his memory will always be a matter of controversy. It is plain, however, that if he had wished to do so he could have put an end to the Terror. In the *Souvenirs* of a contemporary who was in a position to know the facts we find these striking words : "If Robespierre demands blood, blood will be shed ; if he does not demand it, no one will dare to demand it."³ Well, he did demand it—he demanded floods of it—not from taste, but from policy. The guillotine was his weapon and his argument ; and it may well have been that, by his law of the 22nd Prairial, and by his popular committees, and by his work in the bureau of police, and by his conspiracies in the prisons, which so appallingly stimulated the activity of the Tribunal, Robespierre was trying to discredit his enemies in the Committees, to whom the heartsick public, in their ignorance of affairs behind the scenes, would attribute the immense increase in the number of deaths.

On the 11th Messidor the Committee scored a point. On that day the victory of Fleurus was announced: the soil of France was saved from the enemy and French troops were at the gates of Ghent: the Convention was stamping with enthusiasm, and the people of Paris were drunk with joy. This was a check to Robespierre. He had no love for soldiers envied their prestige, and looked askance at it because it injured his own. He had tried to compete with them, but without success. Cambon, on going one day into the room where Carnot worked, found no one there but Maximilien "surrounded by maps and military memoranda." With his head on his hands he was trying to initiate himself into the mysteries of military tactics. "I shall never understand a word of it," he groaned in a tone of irritation. On another occasion he said to Carnot, in a manner that was sour rather than humble: "You are very happy! What would I not give to be a soldier!"¹ Barère's magniloquence, when it devolved on him to comment at the tribune on the despatches from the front, exasperated Robespierre: he would have preferred less excitement: the good news gave him but little pleasure. He inadvertently said to Carnot: "Wait till the first defeat!"² The great victory at Fleurus, indeed, dealt him a direct blow; for what was the use now of so many executions, since the enemy was defeated? The foreign invasion, which was the pretext of the revolutionary government, had been repulsed; and this meant the end of all the massacres and imprisonments and proscriptions. The 11th Messidor was one of those happy days when the whole French nation is at one: in the evening the palace of the Tuilleries was illuminated, and on the amphitheatre, which had been standing there since the Feast of the Supreme Being, there was a grand concert, including the first performance of the *Chant du Départ*.³ The

immense crowd that spread over the garden applauded the magnificent hymn with enthusiasm and kept up their songs and dances till the dawn of day. This, too, was displeasing to Robespierre, who was irritated by a haunting suspicion that his own tortuous and petty policy was a vain thing compared with the glorious victory of the troops, the echo of which had sent all Paris wild with joy. That joy of which he was not the object, that song of glory that celebrated other exploits than his own, wounded him like an insult : "The prosperity of a State," he said, "must be judged less by its successes abroad than by its happy conditions at home. . . ." ¹

He gave free expression to his bitterness on the 21st Messidor, when he declared at the Jacobin Club that "the true victory is that which the friends of liberty win over factions,"² attempting in this way to depreciate the valiant armies of the Republic and the ability of Carnot, who had made them what they were. In this his morbid jealousy was ill-inspired, for the least false step at that moment was likely to be his undoing. Payan had foreseen it. The amusing revelation of the mysteries of the *Mère de Dieu* had dealt a fatal blow both to the worship and to the high-priest of the Supreme Being. By placing the apostle who preached the immortality of the soul in juxtaposition with an old sorceress who was three parts mad, but yet stronger than he, since she bestowed immortality of the body also on her elect, Vadier had achieved a masterpiece. Ever since this striking likeness had made him an object of laughter Maximilien had been like a man who will not own he is hit, but flies distractedly from place to place, conscious of being pursued.

He seems, in his uneasiness, to have shrunk into himself, with no faith any longer in his dilapidated prestige but only in the forces he held in reserve : and

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this is an appropriate moment to inspect as closely as we can the men whom he designed to form his general staff during the battle, and his government when the victory was won.

V

ROBESPIERRE'S GANG

DURING the last months of the year II the followers of the Incorruptible did not enjoy a good reputation, though very little was known of the mysterious methods by which their numbers were increased or of their real strength. There were some, however, who knew enough to dread the possibility of this obscure rabble coming into prominence, seeing that it was recruited from the ranks of those whom revolutionary France considered especially covetous and degraded. "The vile souls that surround you" were the words written to Robespierre by poor Lucile Desmoulins,¹ whom her Camille's confidences had kept well informed. Others who, like her, knew the facts, were afraid of the "hired assassins" that the gloomy tribune gathered round him: "What hope is there of having any government with satellites who have no education and no morality?"² Others, again, declared, not without satisfaction, that "Robespierre and his confederates were ruining themselves by the baseness of their agents"³; and there were even those who thought that, "by surrounding himself with men who had serious grounds for self-reproach," he was astutely securing the help of disciples who were not likely to fail him, because "by saying a word he could put them under the knife."⁴ His contemporaries for the most part confined themselves to these generalities, and if it is difficult now to judge of the strength of this despicable gang, it is still more difficult to understand how Robes-

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pierre, with his vanity, his aloofness, his eulogies of virtue, his exaggerated view of his education and his own merits, could endure such companionship and swell the ranks of his party with such shameful coadjutors. Perhaps his morbid craving for domination, which his colleagues' aversion had only strengthened, found support and satisfaction in commanding this phalanx of filibusters, whom he kept temporarily docile and submissive by the expectation of large profits and quick returns.

In a glass case in the Museum of Archives we may see a list of about a hundred names scribbled in Robespierre's handwriting and headed : *Patriots with talents, more or less.* Most of these names mean nothing to those who visit the Palais Soubise, but the list is nevertheless of the greatest interest, for it was from this store that Maximilien supplied the governmental departments and tribunals with officials devoted to himself. Some of them, through his influence, were quickly and well provided for ; but though there are a few names like Hermann and Payan, the majority of the patriots who figure in this list are quite unknown : labourers, small tradesmen, artisans, and even peasants. But they were all possessed of eminent merits evidently, for they were provided with good posts. Here we find Lubin, the butcher of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, who became secretary to the Commune ; and Raisson, who kept a coffee-house and was made a commissary in the Ministry of Supplies ; and the carpenter Ragot—soon to be a member of the sanguinary Commission of Orange ; and Lambert, the shepherd of Étorges, an absolutely illiterate man, though in other respects not bad, who as a Commissioner of the Government brought order into every part of Champagne. It was pleasant to be on Robespierre's list : and one would be glad to know what information, what recommendations, and what in-

quiries were necessary before he added names to it. The indiscreet *dossiers* of the archives enable us to identify a few of them.

In the course of this narrative mention has already been made of the printer Nicolas, who had installed his presses in the immediate neighbourhood of the Maison Duplay and had been provided with very lucrative work through the patronage of the Government. He printed for the Jacobins,¹ for the Convention,² and for the Department,³ and had not enough presses to fulfil his orders. In a note-book belonging to his friend Payan, national agent for the Commune of Paris, we read these words : "What means can be employed to procure for Citizen Nicolas, at a valuation, six printing-presses, to be taken from those belonging to émigrés or guillotined persons ?" ⁴ The means were soon found. The printer Pottier was imprisoned "as an accomplice of the assassins of Robespierre": he was guillotined⁵: and five of his new presses with all their accessories, cases and type included, were carried off to Nicolas. No one remembered about the valuation, however.⁶ This explains the prosperity of Nicolas's printing-office. The business was conducted on a large scale, with three sleeping-partners: Lazowski, a famous terrorist and mob-leader and something of a *septembriseur*⁷; the carpenter Duplay, who may have been engaged in the matter on his own account or as Robespierre's agent; and Pierre-François Deschamps, who was on the list of *citizens with talents*, and on that ground held at the same time the two offices of agent of the Committee of Trade and Commissariat of the Republic⁸ and of aide-de-camp to General Hanriot, Commander-in-Chief of the Parisian army.⁹ It is not surprising, then, that Deschamps rapidly grew rich. At the outbreak of the Revolution he was a humble shopkeeper selling stockings in the Rue Béthisy; but after his rise in the world he lived in the

Rue des Petits-Augustins with his wife and his first-born son, who was Robespierre's godson.¹ He spent the summer months at Maisons-Alfort in a fine house that had belonged to an *émigré*, which he rented for 2,000 *livres*, and to which a park of fourteen acres was attached. He took with him more than thirty thousand francs' worth of house-linen, including "some very fine and very large sheets that were supposed to have belonged to the *ci-devant* Queen Marie-Antoinette." Deschamps even meditated buying the house of the *émigré* Le Chanteur at Maisons-Alfort, and expected "to raise its value to 400,000 *livres*."²

We must not forget to say that, in addition to his official functions, Deschamps was employed by Robespierre in various confidential matters. He not only consented to take journeys, on occasion, to arrest *suspects*,³ but undertook to carry "the gospel" into the provinces: thus, in Messidor, he was at Boulogne-sur-Mer armed with a warrant signed by Robespierre and Couthon entrusting him with a secret mission. It consisted in visiting the local authorities, singing Maximilien's praises, and making aspersions against Carnot, "a d——d scoundrel who spends the night in the committee-room so that he can open the whole mail," and who did his best to rob the armies of their victory. Legendre and Tallien were also "scoundrels," and Bourdon de l'Oise was not much better.⁴ The most piquant feature in the affair is that Robespierre paid for this propaganda against his colleague on the Committee of Public Safety with money taken from that Committee's funds.⁵

This feast of places and profits, with the hope of still more important benefits at an early date, encouraged many to enrol themselves in the party of the Incorruptible, for it was well known that his generosity to his devotees was boundless, and all the more so because it was practised at the expense of the nation.

We have already mentioned the cases of Calandini, the cobbler who was made a general ; of Duplay and Cietty, who were employed in government works ; of Didiée the locksmith, and Nicolas, Madame Duplay's cousins, who were made jurymen at a salary of eighteen francs a day ; of Garnier-Launay and the grocer Lohier, who became judges of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Many other examples might be given of Robespierre's solicitude for those who served him well. Boullanger the working jeweller was, like Deschamps, aide-de-camp to Hanriot, and he, too, appears on the list of *citizens with talents*. Near his name are those of Mathon,¹ Director of Transports ; Fleuriot-Lescot, Mayor of Paris ; Lasne, general secretary of the Committee of Civil Administrations, Police, and Tribunals ; Moënne, deputy for the national agent Payan ; and Garnerin, who was entrusted with important missions to Alsace. The less gifted were provided for in a body on the jury of Fouquier's tribunal, where the work required no kind of aptitude. It absolutely swarmed with Robespierre's creatures : the carpenter Trinchard, "the man of nature," who eventually became a police agent under the Directory, and immortalised himself by the famous letter in which he boasted of having been "one of those who judged the ferocious beast that devoured a large portion of the republic, the woman who was known as the *ci deven queen*"² ; Sempronius-Gracchus Vilate, who played the spy for everyone, and whose reward for his eminent services was the Princesse de Lamballe's suite of rooms in the Pavillon de Flore ; Lumière the musician ; Ganney the wigmaker ; Desboisseaux, who made sabots and kept a stall "under the arches of the church of Saint-Louis-en-l'Ile"³ ; Chrétien the coffee-house keeper ; Renaudin, maker of musical instruments, who was reputed to be "the ringleader of the jury"⁴ ; Pigeot, formerly a footman, who had the honour of being Robespierre's

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hairdresser¹; and Brochet, who had been an office caretaker, and was Maximilien's "intimate friend and spy."² But one of the most interesting was Villers, who figures in the *Moniteur* among the jurymen appointed by Robespierre on the 22nd Prairial without any indication of his profession—a fact that is explained when we know that this Villers was none other than a servant shared by Saint-Just and Le Bas. His name is on the list of patriots to be employed—and it cannot be denied that he had "talents," for he was a good cook and knew something of hairdressing. Otherwise he was entirely uneducated, and on the rare occasions when he appeared at the tribunal it was "only to complete the number of jurymen." Nevertheless he was a personage: Payan made use of him for mysterious tasks,³ and when Villers went on a journey his passport described him as an "agent of the executive power." Saint-Just paid him no wages: on the contrary, he borrowed money from him, and owed him 2,386 *livres*, which he promised to return "on the tenth or twelfth of Thermidor."⁴

They all speculated on Robespierre's future career, and all of them, while awaiting better things, owed him their daily salary. They served him blindly, indeed, and set such store on his life that they constituted themselves his bodyguard. He never left the house without being surrounded by seven or eight sturdy squires armed with thick sticks: when he attended the Committee of Public Safety these satellites remained in the anteroom.⁵ Garnier-Launay, Didiée, Taschereau, Boullanger, and Nicolas usually made part of this escort, and it is surprising that the truth of the matter should ever have been disputed, for several of these men have admitted it. We even know from Girard—another jurymen—that the little band of protectors was composed of volunteers only: "I was earnestly begged," he says, "to accompany

Robespierre when he had not enough men with him. . . .”¹ We also have the evidence of a witness who followed the great man one day from curiosity when he was encircled by this guard of honour: “There were from twelve to fifteen of them: when they reached the house one of them stepped forward, opened the door, and held it open until Robespierre, who had an air of importance, had passed in.” They all followed him into the house, and the same ceremonial was repeated “after every sitting of the Jacobins.”²

Moreover, Robespierre had his Lyonnais. Stout fellows, these, whose centre and meeting-place was the lodging of the vinegar-maker Gravier, in the house—as we have already said—adjoining that of the Duplays. Gravier had been on the jury of the tribunal from its foundation, having preceded his three fellow-townsmen to Paris: it was in virtue of the law of Prairial that they had been summoned to reinforce him, and it was he who had drawn the attention of Robespierre to their patriotic ardour.³ They were Maçon the shoemaker,⁴ Emery the hatter,⁵ and Fillion, described as a “manufacturer,” a whole-hearted enthusiast who had offered himself in 1793 for the post of executioner, for the sheer pleasure of clearing away the aristocrats from the chief town of the Rhône.⁶ They had left friends behind them in Lyons, among others Achard, tax-collector for the department, and Pilot, the postmaster and president of the local Jacobin Club. To these they wrote frequently.

Their letters are valuable. They were all closely associated with Robespierre, Duplay, Renaudin, Nicolas and others, for the correspondence implies great intimacy with these men and perfect conformity with their views. Achard keeps Gravier fully informed of the achievements of the tribunal in Lyons. “How grand it is! How sublime it is! Every day it

despatches at least fifty, some shot, some guillotined. . . ." Pilot gives news of his health, which is very bad, but "improves every day owing to the destruction of the enemies of our country. . . . My friend ! I assure you that things are going on as well as they possibly could. . . . In a little time you will hear of two or three hundred people being despatched at once. . . ." "The fusillade goes pretty well : sixty, eighty, two hundred at a time . . . and every day the greatest care is taken to arrest others at once, so as to leave no empty places in the prisons." And Archard's enthusiasm grows : " Still more heads, and every day heads are falling. What a majestic sight ! What an imposing effect ! It is all so edifying ! What cement for the Republic ! . . . There have been over five hundred already : twice as many more, and that will do ! "

There are some pessimistic comments on the demolition of the city of Lyons, which, as is well known, was to be destroyed by order of the Convention ; but the work went slowly, and Achard was much distressed about it : "Four hundred thousand *livres* are being spent every decade. . . . If only one could see the work of demolition advancing ! But the indolence of the workmen proves that their arms are not fit to build a republic." That is evident ! Most of these letters end with a cordial "good-day to Robespierre, Duplay, and Nicolas." The formula varies little : it is very familiar : "I wish you good day, and Robespierre too, and Collot, Duplay, Renaudin, Nicolas, and all our friends."¹ They were all on intimate terms ; they gave each other commissions. Gravier had asked his wife to come from Lyons and spend a few days in Paris ; and Pilot, whose wife was to accompany her, wrote to his friend : "In less than a week my *citoyenne* will set out ; she will bring Citizen Duplay's commissions with her "² ; and in answer, no doubt to a

request made by his correspondent, Pilot said: "The moment I am able to procure the stockings for Robespierre I will let you have them."¹ If he wished his wife to see something of the capital it was that she might study good models: "Try to let her see the Jacobins as often as possible. . . . It is there, more than anywhere else, that a mother can imbibe the fine principles which should be the foundation of the education of children. . . ."²

Were they mad? Far from it, they were very practical people. Reverchon the Conventionist passed a discerning judgment on them when he called them "desperadoes" who engaged in "an infamous traffic in denunciations with the object of sequestrating over four thousand homes." These ringleaders, "whose chiefs lived in Paris, desired the republic for themselves only; all the wealth of Lyons was to be divided among about three thousand persons"; and he tells us that Achard, himself one of the most rapacious of these odious speculators,³ described them to Robespierre "as incorruptible candidates whose only ambition is the extirpation of all traitors."⁴ It is staggering to find the most prominent member of the Government associating with such ruffians and entrusting them with formidable legal powers. Wherever the slaughter is greatest, there we find his secret influence. There were two Revolutionary Tribunals doing their deadly work in France: one in Paris, the other at Arras, where Robespierre had wrongs to avenge. A third, under the name of the Popular Commission, was set up at Orange on the 11th Floréal. Its public prosecutor was an Ardennais called Viot, whose name appears on the list of *Patriots with talents*; and two of the judges on this Commission, Roman-Fonrosa and Fernex, figure there also. The other judge was Ragot, a cabinet-maker of Lyons; and the recorder was Benet.

Now Benet was a friend of Payan¹; and Ragot and Fernex were recommended by Gravier to Robespierre,² with whom they kept up a constant correspondence and whom they treated as a comrade.³ He wrote himself to Fernex for news of the good work that the Commission was carrying out, and Fernex answered pleasantly: “I see you are extremely anxious to hear about *those who are wanting their heads.* . . .” and signed himself, “Very fraternally, *your friend.*” His letter was in every respect most reassuring, for the Commission of Orange did not let the grass grow under its feet: in six weeks in that little town it slaughtered three hundred and thirty-two victims. If, as we are sometimes assured, Robespierre was at that time trying “to put the break on the Terror,” he did not go to work very skilfully.

We can see the kind of *talents* he was in search of, and the type of man who won his approval. In the meantime, while issuing his orders to this staff, he had not forgotten the members of the Convention whose death he desired. In one of the note-books he used for memoranda of urgent business we find the words: “Proceed against deputies leading the conspiracy, and strike them whatever the cost may be.”⁴

He had set a police agent on the track of each of them; and this squad of eleven men, under the command of one Guérin, supplied him with detailed reports: Bourdon de l’Oise, Tallien, Legendre, Thuriot and Léonard Bourdon were unable to take a step without their enemy being informed of it. The reports of Robespierre’s spies are models of “netting”: “B.d.L. . . when the Convention rose, went to walk with several citizens in the national garden and dined in the Rue Honoré, No. 58, with one of those citizens, and remained there from half-past two until a quarter to five; on leaving the said house he went to the corner of the Rue Florentin and stood still for a moment,

apparently thinking where he should go ; he turned back as far as the Rue Neuve de Luxembourg, where we were unable to see what house he entered. . . .”

“ Yesterday Citizen Ta . . .¹ left his house at half-past one in the afternoon and walked along the Rue des Quatre-Fils, Rue du Temple, Rue de la Réunion, *ci-devant* Montmorency, Rue Martin, Rue Grenétat, Rue Montorgueil, Passage du Saumon and Rue des Fossés-Montmartre ; amused himself for more than an hour in bargaining for some books ; went into the Palais Égalité, looking from side to side all the time in an uneasy way. Entered the Convention Hall . . . talked to one or two deputies and went out again by the staircase where the chapel used to be² ; seemed to intend going out through the courts, but changed his mind and took the way by the national garden ; went up again by the end of the terrace of the Feuillants ; ascended the said terrace by the stairs opposite to the Café Hotto ; again amused himself by bargaining for books for a good quarter of an hour ; thence went through the Porte du Manège and entered Venua’s restaurant at No. 75. We left him at six o’clock without being able to find out where he went afterwards. . . .”³ If the deputies contrived in this way to elude the unceasing pursuit of Maximilien’s informers it was because they knew they were tracked, and never slept at home, taking shelter instead “ in the most inaccessible dens in the town.”⁴

They were saturated with terror. The sprightly Barère had resolved to die ; others, equally determined to put an end to the situation, but less resigned, were plotting to assassinate their persecutor. Berryer *père* relates that Bourdon de l’Oise showed him “ a cutlass that he had been sharpening for nearly a month ” with a view to stabbing Robespierre in the heart with it on the first opportunity.⁵ Nor was it only the Assembly that was gripped by fear ; the whole of France lay

gasping in a state of torpor that was like the agony of death. The country was teeming with secret messengers armed with the authority of the Committee of Public Safety and calling themselves "agents of Robespierre"—a strange assortment of sinister figures, obscure and elusive, emerging suddenly from the shadows and as quickly returning to them : Villambre, ex-adjudant of the fourth battalion of Ille-et-Vilaine¹ ; Vielle, an old comrade of Saint-Just at the College of Soissons² ; Ève Demaillot, a native of the Jura,³ an admirer and friend of Maximilien,⁴ a Bohemian man of letters, who made his livelihood as the "hired versifier"⁴ of the little shows on the Boulevard. He was appointed Commissioner of the Government for the district between Paris and Blois, and travelled from town to town making speeches, visiting the prisons, composing verses, and preaching the benefits of depopulation. One day at Beaugency, when he was speaking from the tribune of the club, his memory suddenly failed him ; whereupon, with no sign of embarrassment, he seized a violin and struck up a dance-tune amid general laughter.⁵ Tranche-la-Hausse the doctor was the connecting link between the Maison Duplay and Le Bas when the latter was at the front⁶ ; and Duplay himself did not refuse an urgent mission, if we may judge from the words written by Robespierre in one of his pocket-books : "Send Duplay to Calandini."⁷

Adventurers, failures in every profession, spies, Lyonnese desperadoes, jurymen of the tribunal, purveyors for the guillotine—what companions for the man who played the master in the Convention and aspired to dominate the Committees of the Government ! If Robespierre enjoyed himself in this society it was because, among these men who owed everything to him, there was no rival for him to fear ; his obvious superiority made him predominant, and no one dis-

puted his orders or his advice. He liked to be surrounded by inferiors, not equals. He had not a single friend : Saint-Just and Couthon were allied with him as partners, but affection had no part in their relations. The former avoided sitting at Robespierre's table ; when he visited the Rue Saint-Honoré he went upstairs to his comrade's room "without communicating with anyone."¹ As for Couthon, he had left the house several months before this time.² "I'm not safe there," he said to his colleagues from the Puy-de-Dôme. "Every day one sees a dozen cut-throats coming in to see Robespierre, who gives them dinner." He was surprised that the Incorruptible could afford to spend so much. "Even with my expenses," he added, "my pay is hardly enough for me to live on."

Charlotte Robespierre, who had come to live in the Duplays' house at the end of 1793, had quarrelled with her two brothers, and they now regarded her with "the most implacable hatred."³ She lent a willing ear to the gallantries of Fouché, who proposed to marry her, according to her own account, though he already had a wife who was as ugly as she was faithful. Buissart himself, the lawyer of Arras, who was Maximilien's mainstay at the beginning of his career, and to whom eternal gratitude had been vowed in those old days, even Buissart was no longer in favour : in spite of his civic virtues he was horror-struck by the events at Arras, and never ceased lecturing the man he had once patronised. "For more than four months now I have been persistently warning you . . . it seems to me you are asleep and are allowing patriots to be put to death. . . ."⁴ No answer. Exasperated by this silence, Madame Buissart set out for Paris, and arrived at the Maison Duplay to make her appeal in person. "You are always praising virtue, but we, for the past six months, have been governed by every kind of vice. . . . Our sufferings are very great, but

our fate is in your hands. . . ." ¹ Whether Robespierre received her is very doubtful: that he did not listen to her is certain.

As for Robespierre the younger—Bonbon—he was so devoted a disciple that he had no existence apart from his elder brother; he was considered an absolute cypher, "a complete fool, a pitcher that tinkled when his brother rapped upon it." ² Even he could not breathe in the atmosphere of the Maison Duplay, saturated as it was with adulterated incense. After his return from the front he lived in the Rue Saint-Florentin.³

Only the Duplays themselves were left. They remained to the end Maximilien's faithful companions and persistent censor-bearers. Did they keep their timid, apprehensive, suspicious guest in thrall or did he voluntarily lie hidden in this narrow shell till at last it bounded his horizon? By living thus secluded among working men did he mean to pose as a symbol, tacitly publishing his contempt for those who made profit out of the revolution, those whom he called "the corrupt," who fared sumptuously, and ran after women, and filled their pockets? Great changes, it is true, had taken place in the circumstances of the carpenter since that evening in July, 1791, when he yielded to a charitable impulse and took the little member of the Constituent Assembly home with him. Duplay had become a personage: even the most influential people treated him with consideration and flattery: many of them envied him. Collot d'Herbois assured him "of a sincere and unalterable friendship for his republican family. . . ." "Good citizen and happy father that you are, your son, who is already strong in the principles he has been nourished on, will receive a fine inheritance and will know how to preserve it. . . ." ⁴ Madame Duplay no longer occupied herself entirely with the cares of her household, but revealed

at the dinner-table the intrigues that were hatched in the neighbourhood.¹ Simon Duplay, the wooden-legged secretary, had attained to such an important position among Robespierre's helpers that he was suspected of entering the precincts of the Committee in the night, by order of his patron, and taking away several portfolios of documents.² The carpenter's daughters were now scattered: in this month of Messidor of the year II the gentle Élizabeth, the wife of Lebas, became a mother; and Sophie, the wife of Citizen Auzat, had gone to Belgium with her husband, who had a lucrative post connected with supplies for the army. It would seem that Madame Auzat's character was somewhat volatile. Her "inconstancy of heart" apparently created some anxiety in her circle. We shall never know what "absolutely confidential" communications were made long afterwards, on this delicate subject, by Élizabeth Le Bas to Lamartine, which led the poet-historian to confuse Sophie with Éléonore.

The reputation of the latter, on the contrary, was altogether unassailable. She was credited with all the virtues of the mother of the Gracchi: indeed, Dubois-Crancé had invested her with a nickname that caused great amusement to Danton. It was an adaptation of an old jest by Voltaire, who christened a descendant of Corneille, to whom he had given shelter, *Cornélie-Chiffon*, or *Cornelia the Scrap*.³ The enemies of the Incorruptible, therefore, nicknamed Éléonore, in allusion to the carpenter's shop that was her birthplace, *Cornelia the Shaving*. She was supposed to be "promised" to Robespierre. It is very likely that her parents considered, not without pride, the possibility of securing their illustrious lodger for their son-in-law; and she herself doubtless wished to unite herself to the man whose "fanatical"⁴ disciple she was; but, with the exception of one word from Élizabeth Le Bas,

there is nothing to show that Robespierre had any such project.¹ "He did not like women," said one of his colleagues; "his abstract views, his metaphysical talk, his guards, his personal safety, were all incompatible with love, and gave that passion no chance of securing a hold on him."²

Élizabeth Le Bas records in her touching recollections of her youth that she often went with her parents and her sisters to walk in the Champs-Élysées. "We usually chose the most secluded paths; Robespierre came with us. . . . In this way we spent happy times together. We were always surrounded by little Savoyards, whom Robespierre loved to watch dancing; he gave them money; he was so kind! . . . He had a dog called Brount, of which he was very fond; the poor beast was much attached to him."³ Louis Blanc made use of this idyllic theme and enlarged upon it: but, according to him, Robespierre's walks were "solitary"; the little Savoyards, instead of dancing, "played a hurdy-gurdy and sang some mountain tunes," and Maximilien treated them "with such constant munificence" that they called him "the kind gentleman." It is thus that legends grow and are improved upon. Not only does this episode seem to be a little too closely copied from the *Rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire*, in which Jean-Jacques Rousseau speaks of the largesse he scattered among the little Savoyards of La Chevrette,⁴ but there is now no doubt that Robespierre's expeditions were of a less pastoral nature. Since he had been in a huff with the Committee of Public Safety and only entered their hall now and then, late in the evening after his colleagues had left it, he had found leisure to go out of Paris sometimes. There was a carriage at his disposal, as we know, which made his journeys easy for him⁵; and invitations were not wanting. In this way he visited his friend

Jean-Jacques Arthur, a member of the Commune who made himself famous, it was said, by eating the heart of one of the Swiss Guards killed on the 10th August. In spite of his ferocious anarchism, Arthur was able to adapt himself to the royal splendours of the manorial estate of Bercy, which he had rented for his own use with its *château* and park—the finest in the neighbourhood of Paris. Robespierre much enjoyed fishing in the ornamental water there; and he surprised the gardeners, when a fine carp he had caught and landed was leaping convulsively in the grass on the bank, by showing perfectly sincere pity for the tortures of his capture. And further, the people of Issy were convinced, in the summer of the year II, that Maximilien often came to dine in their commune, with Couthon, Hanriot and others, “at the house of a certain Citizen Auvray, tiler to the *ci-devant* King,” and after dinner took a walk in the park of the *ci-devant* Princesse de Chimay, at that time imprisoned in Paris. It was said that Deschamps and Didiée were entrusted with the task of “taking away the Chimay’s silver”; and all the inhabitants of the place “complained of the arrogant and contemptuous tone assumed by these gentlemen at Issy.”¹ It was even asserted that at the end of Messidor the grocer Lohier one day brought two women with him to add gaiety to the festivities.² At Vanves, a neighbouring village, it was believed that the Incorruptible was the owner of a house that was once a convent and had been bought for him in the name of a *citoyenne* who was said to be his mistress. Of all these rumours the last is the only one of which we can speak with certainty: Robespierre never owned any property at Vanves, but Madame de Chalabre possessed a country house there, which makes it very probable that her friend visited her there. For Madame de Chalabre was a most ardent admirer of Maximilien, and in order to be always near him—as

the reader may perhaps remember—had a lodging in the rooms of the printer Nicolas, in an outbuilding of the Convent of the Conception adjoining the house of the Duplays.¹ She mounted guard in the carpenter's courtyard and showed such vigilance in the task that she was one of the Incorruptible's best watch-dogs.

We have seen that in Ventôse Robespierre had dined in Danton's company at Humbert's house at Charenton. Long before that time a portion of the Committee of Public Safety, deserting the Tuilleries, had held secret meetings there, to which they admitted Robespierre—though he was not then a member of the Committee—and also Pache, Hébert and other influential men from the Commune of Paris²: a circumstance that gives great weight to the reports sent to Lord Granville by a spy in the employ of the British Cabinet, who professed to have been present at the secret sittings of the great Committee.³ It is inconceivable that he should have obtained entrance to the well-guarded committee-room in the Tuilleries; but it is not in the least improbable that at Charenton or elsewhere, in a private house that would necessarily be thrown into disorder by the presence of the conspirators, for whom extra servants would be needed, the English spy may have disguised himself as a servant or otherwise, and have overheard the conversation. It is certain that he contrived to follow the plotters on their various expeditions, for it was not always at Charenton that the dissentients of the Committee held their meetings with the members of the Commune; it seems very likely that some of the sittings took place in Deschamps's house at Maisons-Alfort. It will be remembered how luxuriously this friend of Robespierre had furnished his country house, where Marie-Antoinette's fine sheets were on the beds; and we must not forget "the Chimay's silver," which this same Deschamps had carried away from Issy,



THE HOUSE CALLED ROBESPIERRE'S
at Maisons-Alfort.

From M. G. Hartmann's Collection.

perhaps with the idea of doing special honour to his guests.

At Maisons-Alfort the conspirators were on the road to Choisy, and it was there, no doubt, that they resolved to meet again. On the 17th March, 1793, a certain Nicolas Fauvelle, a man employed in some subordinate capacity in the manufacture of paper money,¹ acquired a large house at Choisy, which stood on the bank of the Seine and was surrounded by a magnificent park. It was said in the neighbourhood that Fauvelle did not buy the property on his own account, but on behalf of Danton, who did in fact occupy it immediately afterwards, and furnished it luxuriously. From that date onwards there is no lack of evidence. First of all there is the house itself, which, though threatened with imminent destruction owing to an extension of the railway, is still standing, extremely dilapidated, and used as workmen's dwellings, but not yet stripped of its last vestiges of magnificence. The great salon with its eight windows is still in existence, the balcony with the row of corbels still hangs above the flowing Seine, and the hornbeam-trees still stand beside the river. In 1908 this house was marked, in the presence of M. Clemenceau, at that time President of the Ministerial Council, with a plaque commemorating Danton's occupation of it. His sojourn there was short, for he died a year after settling at Choisy; but the place possessed certain advantages, and Robespierre continued to frequent it when he wished to take counsel with some of his confederates far from the eyes of the inquisitive.

At the beginning of 1793 the mayor of this place was Pierre-Jean Vaugeois, the brother of Madame Duplay: a man of sixty-two, with a fair peruke, a long nose, and a thin face marked with a blue stain

over the right eye.¹ His relationship with Robespierre's host gave him importance, which was increased by his position as first magistrate of a little town to which the splendours of the royal palace, when it was offered for sale, had attracted various shrewd speculators. A certain Benoit, who professed to have been silversmith to the clergy, and was a great friend of the constitutional bishop Gobel, bought the stables of the *ci-devant* tyrant and dug out a fine English garden on the Pompadour's terraces.² The great palace, the purchaser of which was declared insolvent, was made partly into a military hospital and partly into ballrooms for the people of the village; the little palace, which the architect Gabriel³ had built for Louis XV, became the property of a certain Bonardot, a friend of General Hanriot, who often disported himself there with his aides-de-camp.⁴ Vaugeois, therefore, was able to form some very pleasant acquaintanceships. Having bought, in conjunction with Fauvelle and Danton, the cellar of the *ci-devant* Duc de Coigny, he too was in a position to entertain Hanriot—who appreciated fine vintages and the officers of his staff, several of whom were also keen judges of wine. After dinner the party would take a breath of air on the terrace and look in at the palace. On a certain Décadi they found the young people of the little town enjoying a dance; whereupon the officers, who had just left the dinner-table in the company of Didiée the locksmith, Vaugeois *filz*, Éléonore Duplay and her brother Maurice, roughly turned out the dancers—“those idlers”—and, horrified by the luxury of the royal dwelling, broke the mirrors in the great *salon*. Even the self-contained Éléonore declared “that there ought to be a guillotine at Choisy.”⁵ We may be almost certain that this scene took place in the autumn of 1793, for the *procureur* of the Commune of Choisy, Beausire, having claimed an indemnity of fifty francs

from Hanriot for the damage done by his officers, was arrested for this audacious behaviour, and was kept in prison for more than a year. This Beausire, a person of whom there is not much good to be said, was the husband of the girl Oliva, who in the old days had played the part of Marie-Antoinette in the fraudulent affair of the Queen's necklace. He had a number of partisans at Choisy, and the day after he was arrested a dozen of them set out to Paris to demand his release by the Committee of General Security. But Didiée and Hanriot were on the watch: the petitioners were all clapped into prison before they had fulfilled their mission.¹

Thus began the Terror at Choisy. Its later developments were to reflect, as in a microcosm, the course of events in Paris. Vaugeois, strong in his position as Duplay's relative, became the Tiberius of the district: now mayor, now president of the local Popular Society, according to his caprice or his advantage at the moment, he secured for his son the post of superintendent at the Military Hospital, and distributed all the other offices among such people as his own tradesmen. His friend Lenoir, a stranger in the place, was made national agent; his grocer Lionnais—whom he recommended to Robespierre as “a patriot with talents,” and whom the Incorruptible added to his list—was made manager of the arms-factory; Simon, once the tyrant's groom and a professional fiddler, became *concierge* at the hospital; Louveau, formerly a cook, was appointed keeper of military stores; and it was at the same time that Bodement, a gardener at Thiais—the man who demanded seventy thousand heads—was chosen as one of the four members of a Popular Commission. Another of them was Vaugeois's cousin Laviron, of Crêteil, whose eldest brother has already been mentioned as a juryman of the Revolutionary Tribunal.²

Whenever Vaugeois retired from the presidency of the Committee he always gave it to his son, or his friend Fauvelle, or Simon the fiddler, or his comrade Benoit,¹ and in this way Choisy was carefully kept under the yoke. In the hands of this crew what became of the beautiful furniture, the valuable pictures, the precious hangings, the thousands of sumptuous objects with which the palace was crowded? Of this we have no information beyond a few records of the carrier Mollé's journeys, taking chests of drawers, writing-tables, marble tables and other such things to Paris.² But the most characteristic feature of the revolution in Choisy was the frequent appearance there of the great Parisian patrols. The guests of Danton and Fauvelle had given the key-note, and after the death of the former the gatherings continued in Vaugeois's house. In the earlier days Hébert, Père Duchesne, had attended the fêtes; they were now attended by Le Bas, Dumas (President of the Revolutionary Tribunal), Duplay with his son and daughters, Couthon, Saint-Just and Fouquier-Tinville³; and especially by Hanriot, who came "nearly every Décadi with his aides-de-camp," and often came again "in the course of the decade." They arrived on horseback, which accounts for the complaints brought against disorderly cavalcades by the people of Maisons-Alfort, who deplored the accidents caused in their village by the general's staff when they dashed through its streets at a furious gallop.⁴

When Robespierre was of the party his bodyguard Didiée was invariably invited. He arrived with a sword at his side and a *bonnet rouge* on his head⁵; and to impress his fellow-citizens, who had known him as an assistant-locksmith, made a great show of his familiarity with Maximilien. He "flung himself on his neck" and clasped him in his arms⁶ as if he were a very dear friend whom he had not seen for ten years,

though he had every intention of keeping close to his side and even sleeping near his door.

The banquets took place either in Fauvelle's house—although, since the death of Danton, it had been in the market—or in the house of Vaugeois, where Robespierre sometimes spent the night: Citizen Lebègue's son saw him there one morning “when he had just risen and was warming himself by the fire.” On such an occasion as this the ex-cook Louveau was employed to prepare the dinner; the street was washed lest the illustrious guest should be distressed by its unpleasant smell; and some orange-trees were even brought in from the conservatories of the palace to decorate the house. The meals were riotous. Didiée, who despised good wine no more than the others,¹ boasted, after drinking some, of his inflexible conduct at the Tribunal. “He had never voted for anything but death.” And Fouquier-Tinville, always obliging, whispered to Vaugeois in acknowledgment of his abundant hospitality: “If anyone in your commune annoys you, all you have to do is to send him to me.”² “One heard nothing talked about but the heads that ought to be cut off,” said a certain Piot later on.

These disconcerting revelations work great changes in the traditional figure of Robespierre, the enemy of good cheer and revelry, the lover of solitary walks and gloomy meditations. One of his contemporaries, a historian of great penetration, discerned that towards the end of his tumultuous career Maximilien, being “enervated and disillusioned,” gave way “to new vices alien to his temperament,” which were born of the “intolerable distress of his soul and completed the ruin of his resolution.”³ It is certain, however, that the “orgies” of Choisy did not prevent him from indulging his taste for solitude, for “eight days before Thermidor” the Rolands’ friend Bosc, who had been hidden in the woods for nearly a year and never took

the risk of leaving them except in disguise, suddenly found himself face to face with the Incorrputible among the vines of Puteaux. Robespierre recognised him and murmured : " I thought he was dead "—so much was he surprised to find that a man could be the confederate of his enemies and yet remain alive.¹ This anecdote is more consistent with the character of Maximilien's classical portrait than the degrading carousals of Choisy. Yet we cannot reject the united testimony of fifty inhabitants of a commune, nor the more qualified admissions of Robespierre's companions at the dinner-table.²

What kind of manner did he assume at these gatherings, at which peasants such as the gardener Baudement and Simon the fiddler were present ? How did he throw off his habitual formality, lest he should be a spoil-sport among the high-spirited guests of Fauville or Vaugeois ? Being an aristocrat at heart he detested all that was common and coarse. He was seen one day at the Jacobin Club quickly tearing from his head a *bonnet rouge* that a tactless enthusiast had placed upon it ; and we know, too, that he alone among his contemporaries never wore the homely ample garments, the long pantaloons, high boots, and loose flowing coat that composed the dress of his colleagues. He was always trussed up in a costume reminiscent of Louis XVI's time : knee-breeches, and stockings of thread or silk, which made him look, according to some, like " a dancing master of the old régime," and according to others like a " lynx dressed for a ball." These garments distinguished him from the rest of the world, set him apart, made him yet more isolated ; and perhaps he unconsciously relished a sense of retaliation in dressing himself like the men of fashion he had envied in past years, when he was wearing threadbare waistcoats and coats tattered at the elbows.

Of all the surprises held in store by the official inquiry at Choisy the most unexpected and most bewildering is the discovery, in the houses of the Vaugeois family, of Dom Gerle and Catherine Théot. They both frequently visited the woman Duchange—a sister of Vaugeois and “formerly nurse to the Duc d’Aquitaine”—who was now a sexagenarian and had been paralysed for fifteen years. By her own confession and the confession of her two nieces Agatha and Mélanie Vaugeois, the ex-Carthusian and the *Mère de Dieu* “paid visits” to Citoyenne Duchange. Vaugeois denied having had them in his house; but his sister, with the candour of the New Eve’s initiates, asserted “that it was at his house that she had made Dom Gerle’s acquaintance.” She declared, however, that Mother Catherine had not “consulted the cards” there nor drawn the horoscope of the whole family; and in truth these were not the sort of rites practised in the Rue Contrescarpe. But it is very probable that the *Mère de Dieu* enacted in the course of her visit some ceremony of initiation. Witnesses worthy of belief¹ asserted that Robespierre and Vaugeois received the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, having had “the honour of kissing the chin” of the prophetess.² Louveau the cook and Simon the violinist also deposed that “Robespierre and others, including Gerle and Catherine Théot,” dined several times with Vaugeois; on one occasion Simon had been invited.³

Ah, if Vadier had but known! What a crushing blow might have been dealt to the high-priest of the Supreme Being!

The carouses at Choisy continued to take place until the end of Messidor. Hanriot’s last visit occurred in the third decade of that month. On Décadi the 10th of Thermidor Robespierre was expected. A quite new pleasure, too, was being prepared for him:

the Vaugeois family had secured a live hare, which they were keeping to be coursing by his dog Brount.

The 10th Thermidor was the day fixed for the funeral celebrations in memory of the young republicans Joseph Barra and Agricole Viala. The programme of the ceremony had been drawn up by David, and promised even a greater number of symbols than that of the Feast of the Supreme Being : the ballet-girls from the opera figured on it. "Dances representing the most profound sadness" were to be performed by these dancers, who would scatter cypress branches over urns containing "the ashes" of the two heroic boys.¹ When Robespierre proposed to spend this solemn day with Vaugeois at Choisy was he providing himself with an excuse for remaining away from the fête ? No doubt his presence there was not indispensable, since he was no longer President of the Assembly and for the past five decades had made a point of holding aloof from his colleagues. On the other hand, there were those who prognosticated—rather rashly, in truth—that the fête was only being organised with a view to giving his partisans an opportunity of gathering the whole Convention together, and by means of a popular movement striking at the deputies of whom he wished to be rid.² The holders of this view believed that the Assembly, on being dissolved by this act of violence, would be replaced by a new Constituent Assembly composed of the Commune of Paris and the flower of the Jacobins, both of which bodies were fanatical adherents of Robespierre.

If we cannot prove that Maximilien actually planned this *coup d'état*, we cannot help feeling it strange that he should have deliberately avoided being present at the patriotic ceremony of the 10th Ther-

midor. Was he adopting tactics that had often served him well—disappearing at the moment of action in order to be provided with an alibi in case of failure ? For quite certainly he was preparing a blow of some kind ; and the Committee of Public Safety, being either well informed or merely suspicious, assumed the defensive by sending off to the forces on the frontier twenty-four of the forty-eight companies of gunners who formed “ Robespierre’s artillery ”—an unexpected measure that infuriated the Jacobins.¹ The Committee had also forbidden a meeting of all the sectional committees in Paris, illegally convoked for the 8th Thermidor at the Hôtel de Ville, as though to receive there their final orders before the battle.² And even if we pay no heed to hints of a political nature—always subject to a variety of interpretations and therefore not very convincing—and study only such symptoms as are personal and private, which are far more conclusive, what is the meaning of this note written by Robespierre in one of his pocket-books : “ Hold the revolutionary army in readiness ; recall its detachments to Paris to frustrate the conspiracy ” ?³ And what is the meaning of this letter, addressed by Hanriot to the mayor, Lescot-Fleuriot, on the 25th Messidor ? “ You will be pleased with me and with the way I carry out the business . . . I should have wished, and still wish, the secret of the operation to be confined to our two heads ; the bad people shall know nothing about it.”⁴ The Citoyenne Lescot-Fleuriot said that “ her husband had been very melancholy for several days, refusing harshly to tell her the subject of his preoccupation.”⁵ On the 2nd Thermidor Hanriot, Fouquier-Tinville and a dozen others went to dine with Fleuriot at the Mairie, installed at that time in the house formerly occupied by the first president of the Parlement. On rising from the table they went to walk in the garden to talk at their ease ;

they looked "greatly preoccupied."¹ The worthy Deschamps knew what was brewing and said nothing about it, but his wife did not conceal from her cronies at Maisons-Alfort that "there were men walking calmly about Paris who little thought they were going to be guillotined very shortly," and that there were "many deputies"² among them. The fiery Achard wrote from Lyons to his friend Gravier: "We are in a state of the most acute anxiety here; we have no doubts about the victory . . . but there must be no slackness . . . no pity—but blood, blood."³ Why did Saint-Just, having borrowed two thousand and odd *livres* from his cook Villers, promise to return them "on the 10th or 12th of Thermidor"?⁴ Why did Le Bas, "five or six days before the 9th Thermidor," say to his young wife in the Jardin Marboeuf: "If it were not a crime, I should blow out your brains and kill myself; at least we should die together! . . . But no—there is that poor child.?"⁵ It is evident that Robespierre's intimate associates were expecting an event of which the issue seemed to them uncertain, and that they knew the 10th Thermidor, so close at hand, would be the day of the crisis.

On the 8th the situation developed. Robespierre, who for more than a month had seldom appeared in the Convention, attended the sitting on that day, and it was said that he meant to speak. This news caused the hall—not usually very full—to be crowded as on special occasions: the people pushed their way into the public seats and the Hall of Liberty and the petitioners' gallery and the bar, and even overflowed into the places reserved for the deputies. Such was the custom; in spite of the regulations, any petitioner in search of a deputy, or even mere onlookers, would enter the semi-circle and sit on the benches. The

public walked about as though in the street, without uncovering, and even the deputies only removed their hats when, in some moment of disturbance, the president, who was usually bareheaded, put on his hat to restore order.¹

The Convention Hall was very large—much longer than it was wide,² and singularly high.³ Seen from the public galleries, it had the appearance of a deep and narrow trench, filled always with noise and movement. Ten rows of benches covered with green imitation morocco⁴ were ranged on ascending steps, which were curved at the corners and cut through the middle by a wide passage. This was “the bar.” It was here that deputations waited. Opposite to the bar and facing the ranks of benches stood the tribune. This was not very high; it had five steps on each side leading up to a platform, from which the members delivered their speeches. Behind it, and raised a little above it, was the president’s table, and on the same level the secretaries’ tables stood to right and left. All this woodwork was ornamental, being of lime and maple-wood and decorated with bronze dragons, roses and crowns in relief, on a background of verd-antique; the steps of the tribune were of mahogany.⁵ The walls of the hall were covered up to a certain height with green drapery bordered with red and hanging in heavy folds; above this, on a background of ochre, were eight great figures of the Sages of the past, painted in distemper.⁶ A large trophy of colours captured from the enemy formed a canopy of glorious tatters above the presidential chair, a fine piece of furniture draped “in the Roman style” after designs by David.⁷

It was Collot d’Herbois that day who occupied it, while Robespierre stood in the tribune and read steadily for nearly an hour. The monotonous tones of his rasping voice broke harshly into the silence—

an impressive silence, pregnant with expectation and suspicion. Whither were these pompous periods leading? Was this a manifestation of clemency? Was it an act of contrition, a confession of past errors, an appeal for concord, a perfidious attack, a declaration of war, or an admission of weakness? It was all these things mixed together at random, with contradictions and repetitions and reticences intermingled, and here and there a few sincere words of lofty melancholy. This laboriously written speech was lacking in plan, and still more in lucidity. After a time some words of personal vindication were introduced; the orator laid stress on his long services, the dangers that threatened him perpetually, the ingratitude and bad faith of his colleagues: "It is we who are assassinated and we who are depicted as redoubtable!" His heart was "shattered by all the treacheries he encountered"; he was "but one feeble individual exposed to the outrages of every faction," whom the ill-intentioned have tried to ruin by endowing him "with gigantic and ridiculous importance." He denounced "the monsters who have flung patriots into prison cells and struck terror into persons of every condition"; he spoke of the list, the famous list of heads that he was declared to be demanding, though he found it difficult to believe in such horrible perfidy: "Is it true that a certain number of blameless deputies have been persuaded that their death is determined? Is it true that this falsehood has been spread abroad with such skill and audacity that a great number of our colleagues no longer dare to spend the night in their own homes?" He had been slandered, then? The audience breathed a sigh of relief; but a moment later, into that jumble of lofty eloquence and twaddle, there crept disquieting allusions to "a few ruffians, the authors of all our ills," to "the perfidious deputies," to "the league of knaves, who have confederates in

the Committee of General Security," and to whom are affiliated certain "members of the Committee of Public Safety." He had not, then, given up the idea of striking at his enemies? What were they to think? Without any definite statement he passed on to attack "the frightful system of Terror" and the depravity of the subordinate agents who supplied the scaffold with victims and wrung ransoms from their fellow-citizens: "Let us purify our system of national surveillance, instead of making use of vice; the weapons of liberty should only be touched by pure hands." This was aimed at Héron and Sénar and their gang, and at Vadier who employed them; and the more honest members of the Assembly were about to applaud, but abstained when the speaker went on to praise the system he had just been attacking: "Without a revolutionary government the Republic cannot be firmly established. . . . If it be destroyed to-day, liberty will be dead to-morrow. . . . Having once started upon our present course, if we stop before it is finished we must perish . . ." What! Did he not disapprove, after all, of the recent severities? Quite the contrary: "No, we have not been too severe. . . . We hear talk of our harshness while our country reproaches us for our weakness!"

When we read this amazing harangue we can understand why it produced on those who heard it an effect of "stupour." This wild process of "see-sawing," intended to reassure some while threatening others, without mentioning any names, left the audience half stunned. The speech contained a little of everything, excepting only a single point of which the mind could take hold. Robespierre vented his spleen upon the men who, at the Feast of the Supreme Being, "in the midst of the public joy," insulted the president of the National Convention while he was speaking to the assembled people. "Ah! I dare not

name them at this moment, nor in this place!" Neither did he name the man who, "to increase the number of malcontents," poured into the ears of the malicious the tale of a so-called conspiracy by "a few devout imbeciles," and considered it "an inexhaustible subject for indecent and puerile sarcasms." Vadier being thus disposed of, he aimed a blow at Carnot and Prieur, but still with no mention of names: "The military administration is hampered with an authority that is unworthy of trust." He even insinuated that it was in league with the enemy: "England, so much abused in our speeches, is spared by our arms." It may be objected that France was victorious; but Robespierre had a poor opinion of victory. "It only gives a weapon to ambition, *sends patriotism to sleep*, awakens pride, and with its glittering hands digs a grave for the Republic!" These bewildering statements, moreover, are mingled with idealistic apostrophes: "No, Chaumette; no, Fouché, death is not eternal slumber!"—and with outpourings that reveal all the bitterness of the heart he believed to be tender when it was only cankered. "They have gone so far as to lay to my charge all their own iniquities and all the severities necessary for the safety of our country! . . ." "Any man who stands up to defend public morality will be overwhelmed with insults and proscribed by knaves." Conclusion: to shake off the yoke of the Committees, purify them—that is to say, eject from them all the ruffians who were hostile to Robespierre—and "*create unity of government* under the supreme authority of the Convention."¹

Of this discourse all that posterity need bear in mind is the lamentable picture it paints of the state of the country after three years of revolution: a picture of "intrigue and self-interest triumphant"; of "every vice let loose"; of "the country divided like booty"; of a world "peopled by dupes and

knives"; of virtue "suspected and depreciated"; of the Government "encouraging stock-jobbing" and robbing the people—the people "who are feared, flattered, and despised"; of the depravity of the Government's agents; of "the perfidy, the improvidence, the corruption, the rascality and the treachery that governed the administration"; of "the degraded legislative body." Any historian of our own day who dared to paint so black a picture of the achievements of the Convention would be anathematised, scorned, and called a renegade, a blasphemer, an *anti-français*; and yet he would merely be echoing the opinion of Robespierre, who was not reputed a reactionary.

On this occasion he made an irreparable blunder. He had thought it clever to draw in his claws while allowing their existence to be divined and to throw upon others, without naming them, the responsibility for the Terror, with which, forgetting his law of Prairial, he declared himself "completely unconnected." But the distrust of his audience was too much on the alert to allow them to be deceived by these tactics, and when he folded up his papers and came down from the tribune the effect produced by his obscure discourse was quite different from anything he had expected. The Assembly hesitated. What should it do? Should it prostrate itself again or insist on explanations? Instead of soothing the tortures of the members he had made them sharper, and there were many who recognised themselves in the portraits he had drawn. Should they attempt to cajole him or take up their position at once as his determined foes? Lecointre and Barère tried the former method, and begged that the speech might be printed. The motion was coldly received; but Couthon improved upon it by proposing that the speech should not only be printed, but sent to the

forty-four thousand communes of the Republic, the usual mark of unanimous approval. The Convention yielded and obeyed, though obviously without enthusiasm. But Vadier could not remain quietly in his seat after hearing Robespierre refer to his report on the *Mère de Dieu* as puerile and indecent ; he rose up in the tribune, tall and thin, grave and comical, and in impressive tones revealed his pained astonishment to his colleagues. What ! Was his famous report on Catherine Théos "connected only with a ridiculous farce ?" Was that great conspirator "a woman only to be despised ?" "I did not say that ! . . ." interrupted Robespierre, who for the first time for many a day seems to have beaten a retreat before this opposition ; and it is remarkable that the recoil, which must have been galling to his pride, should have taken place in connection with the prophetess. . . . Vadier disdainfully went on with his speech, defending his report as being composed "in the ironical tone proper to the routing of fanaticism," and promising something still better. "I have since collected," he said, "some immense documents ; I shall make this conspiracy appear in a more imposing frame. . . . You shall see . . . you shall see all ancient and modern conspirators figuring in it."¹

Then Cambon in his turn, encouraged by Vadier's example, rose up and spoke : "The time has come to speak the whole truth : one man alone paralyses the Convention, and that man is Robespierre ! . . ." There was an outburst of applause. Maximilien protested, claiming the right to express his opinion. A cry came simultaneously from every part of the hall : "That is what we all claim !" Panis, at his wits' end with fear, implored to be told whether his head were in danger. Billaud-Varenne interrupted : "Let us submit the speech we have just heard to the Committees before having it printed." "What, what ?"

groaned Robespierre, “would you send my speech to be seen by the members I accuse ?” and through the sound of many muttering voices a cry was heard : “ Name them, then ! ” “ Yes, yes, name them ! ” several members insisted. But Maximilien had shot his bolt. The revolt of this assembly, which he had hitherto ruled with a rod of iron, irritated and disconcerted him. Whether prompted by submission or anger or contempt, he protested that he would not share in the discussion, whatever steps they might take “ to prevent his speech from being sent.” While he was coming down from the tribune, seating himself next to Couthon and talking to him “ with an air of anxiety,”¹ the deputies were growing more and more excited. The Convention seemed to be waking up ; everyone who spoke against Robespierre and the exactions of “ his wounded vanity ” was applauded. The decree was revoked ; the speech was not to be sent to the communes. He was foiled. The Incorruptible, who had started up when the vote was taken, “dropped down again on to his bench,” and Mailhe, who sat trembling close at hand, heard him sigh : “ I am lost ! ”²

At five o’clock³ he left the Tuileries, a vanquished man, and returned to the Maison Duplay for dinner. It is said that he went out afterwards with the carpenter’s daughters to enjoy a breath of air in the Champs-Elysées. On the previous day he had taken the same walk in their company, and had been gay to the pitch of chasing the cockchafers like a boy let out of school.⁴ When the time came to return to the town and attend the meeting of the Jacobins the daylight was fading, and Maximilien stood still for a moment to watch the sunset. It was one of the beautiful evenings of that torrid summer of the year II. The wide cloudless sky above the hills of Chaillot was a sheet of gold and purple. To Éléonore Duplay it

seemed a good omen. "It means fine weather for to-morrow," she said.¹

At the Jacobin Club there was the scent of battle in the air. The church in which the meetings were held was absolutely crammed. Robespierre was greeted with "frenzied applause."² The members were aware of the affronts that had been put upon him by the Convention; they swore to avenge him, to conquer or die with him. He read his speech to them, and they listened to it with enthusiastic stamping of feet. When he had finished he silenced the applause and said with the air of a man to whom life is a burden: "This speech is my last will and testament. The league of the wicked is so strong that I cannot hope to escape it. I succumb without regrets; I leave my memory in your hands, and you will defend it."³ By the cries of the audience and the emotion that swept over them he was able to estimate the forces at his disposal, and flung out a summons to insurrection: "Deliver the Convention from the ruffians that oppress it! . . . Forward! Save liberty once more!"⁴ Amid a tumult of cheers a motion was passed to expel from the club all the deputies who opposed the printing of the speech. Two of these were present, Collot and Billaud, and they were seized and dragged from their seats, with cries of: *A la guillotine!* After some rough handling, and even some blows, they were pushed out into the street by the shoulders and, fuming with fury, returned to the Committee of Public Safety. In the room with the pillars they found their colleagues holding a secret meeting, with several lamps (white, mounted in gilt) lighting their tables. It was midnight, and they were all working in silence. Carnot sat apart studying plans. Saint-Just was writing at an isolated bureau;

his presence was embarrassing to the others, who wished to take steps in preparation for the morrow and the storms it threatened to bring forth. When he saw Collot and Billaud come into the room breathless and pale with rage Saint-Just asked them perfectly calmly, with an inscrutable air of mockery : " What is happening at the Jacobins ? " Collot strode up and down the room as though to quiet himself. Suddenly he made a dart at the " snuffler," and caught him by the arm : " You are drawing up our bill of indictment ? " Saint-Just, taken aback, could only stammer. Collot shook him, and repeated : " You are drawing up our bill of indictment ? " " Well, yes, Collot, you are not mistaken : I am writing your bill of indictment." And turning to Carnot he added : " You are not forgotten in it either." A dispute followed. Should they arrest this rebel ? He had no right to speak in the Convention without first submitting his report to the Committee ; he must read it to them, and then they would see. . . . He promised to do so, and returned to his writing with an affectation of calm. And until dawn he never left his place, but sat steadily writing, listening to every word that was said, trying to catch some hint of the preparations that were on foot.

All night long in the anterooms there were deputies arriving in search of news ; but the door was well guarded ; no one entered.¹ Neither did any member of the Committee leave the room of the pillars. They were all watching Saint-Just, who was still writing ; they were waiting for the communication he had promised them. When day dawned it became apparent that he had disappeared. They instantly took advantage of his absence to draw up a proclamation to the people, and discuss the question of General Hanriot's arrest. Couthon appeared on the back of his gendarme and wished to know what was going on. Fresh quarrels

broke out : " Arrest Hanriot ! The most stainless of patriots ! Had they sworn to let loose a counter-revolution ? " Time passed in idle disputes, but Saint-Just did not return, and soon the hour would come when they must go into the assembly-hall, for the sitting would shortly begin. The door opened. Was it Saint-Just at last ? No ; an usher. He presented a paper. It was from Saint-Just : " Injustice closed my heart ; I will open it wholly to the Convention." ¹

At the time when the Committee was expecting him, Saint-Just, with the air of a man who has perfect confidence in the issue of the day, was riding, as was his custom, in the paths of the Bois de Boulogne, on one of the fine horses that were always at his disposal.² And Robespierre showed the same sense of security. He left his house after breakfasting "*en famille*" ;³ when Duplay advised him to be on his guard he answered that he felt no anxiety. " The bulk of the Convention is pure. . . ." ⁴ He was even more carefully frizzed and dressed-up than usual⁵ ; he had put on the fine coat of silky violet cloth and the nankeen breeches that he had worn at the Feast of the Supreme Being. Surrounded by his bodyguard armed with clubs he reached the Tuilleries, where the crowd was great ; the galleries had been thronged since five o'clock in the morning⁶ ; the anterooms, the lobbies, the bar, and even the enclosure of the deputies were crammed with a turbulent crowd, which included a good number of Hanriot's aides-de-camp and of prominent Jacobins. The noisy mob in the galleries, impatient to express their feelings, applauded Robespierre as he entered and took his seat in accordance with his usual custom, in the first row of the Mountain, quite close to the tribune.

By eleven o'clock the deputies were in their places. Thuriot occupied the chair⁷ in the absence of Collot d'Herbois, who was still detained at the Committee.

Despite the buzz of conversation and the inattention of the whole audience, the secretaries proceeded to read the correspondence and the minutes of the day before. Then suddenly the drama began. Saint-Just mounted the tribune, his stern face buried in a wide cravat with an elaborate knot. He wore a chamois-coloured coat, breeches of pale grey cloth, a white waistcoat,¹ and gold rings in his ears.² The ushers hurried off at once to the committee-rooms to give notice to the laggards, and loiterers in the passages streamed back into the hall. From the Committee of Public Safety all the members except Carnot came hastening in; they had just despatched the usher Courvol to the Commune with an order summoning Hanriot and Payan to appear before the Convention. There had been even some question of imprisoning the whole Duplay family for isolating Robespierre from his head-quarters.³

Saint Just began to speak; his opening words were solemn. But suddenly Tallien sprang to the tribune, pushed away the speaker and took his place. When it transpired that he was attacking Robespierre he was loudly applauded. Billaud succeeded him, and in strong, sonorous phrases urged the Assembly to resist courageously: "It will perish if it be weak." "No, no!" All the deputies were on their feet waving their hats above their heads. Le Bas was horrified, and sought to protest; cries of *Order!* silenced him, and when he made another effort changed into the cry: *À l'Abbaye!* From that moment the Convention, which had been in a state of catalepsy for many months, seethed with excitement; from its tumultuous ranks rose the menacing roar of a long dormant volcano on the point of eruption.¹ Billaud's breathless sentences were cut into fragments by the incessant clapping of hands, and shouts that sounded like cries of deliverance. Incited by this success he dealt still harder blows. Every

word hit the mark, and when Robespierre, foaming at the mouth, sprang towards the tribune to insist upon a hearing he was brought to a halt by a mighty yell : “Down, down with the tyrant !” Billaud, being out of breath, was relieved by Tallien, but remained at his side to support him if necessary. Robespierre succeeded in mounting the steps and stood pressed against the other men, elbow to elbow, ready to burst into speech at the first pause ; but Tallien was well launched ; he brandished a dagger wherewith to strike “the new Cromwell,” and demanded that those who served him, “dissolute men ruined by debauchery,” should be punished. The Convention enthusiastically applauded ; it felt regenerated, and passed decrees in torrents—for the arrest of Hanriot and his aides-de-camp ; of Dumas, president of the odious tribunal ; of Boullanger and Nicolas and Payan, and the whole staff and all the adjutants of the conspirators. Whenever the speaker paused to take breath and Robespierre made a motion to interrupt him the president’s bell drowned his faint and shaking voice and a storm of curses burst out : “Down with you—it is not for you to speak, tyrant !” And there was a cry for Barère, who was mounting the tribune.

There were four of them now, crushed into that small space. Maximilien was forced back in spite of his struggles to keep his place, and was obliged to leave the tribune ; but he remained at the foot of the steps, hat in hand, quite close to Couthon—whose gendarme had just set him down there—and to Saint-Just, who stood motionless, with crossed arms, looking like a marble figure leaning against the woodwork of the tribune. After Barère came Vadier, who returned to his favourite theme : for the tenth time he repeated the story of the *Mère de Dieu*. There was no need for caution now : the orator garnished his speech



Portrait de Robespierre fait à l'aquarelle, par Parseval
Grandmaison, à la séance du 9 Thermidor.
(Les mots sous cet aquarelle de M. de Conyerville ayant
Parseval Grandmaison donna ce dessin.)

PORTRAIT OF ROBESPIERRE.

Drawn in pen-and-ink by Parseval Grandmaison at the sitting
of the 9th Thermidor. Reproduced from *La Revolution Française*,
April, 1901. Communicated by M. Noël Charavay.

with allusions to "the astute personage who can assume every sort of mask . . . the tyrant who has usurped the powers of the Committee of General Security." "If that tyrant has made an attack upon me in particular, it is because I wrote a report on the subject of fanaticism which did not please him ; and this is the reason : under the mattress of *La Mère de Dieu* there was a letter addressed to Robespierre. That letter informed him that his mission was foretold in the book of Ezekiel. . . . Among the documents I have received since then there is another letter from a certain Chénon, a notary at Geneva, who is at the head of the *illuminés* ; he suggests that Robespierre should establish a supernatural constitution ! . . ." From all parts of the hall and from every mirth-filled gallery sarcastic laughter fell like a scourge on Robespierre, as he stood there stamping in his helplessness. Vadier did not pause ; he made game of "Maximilien's modesty," which provoked a burst of merriment, and he revealed the Incorrputible's habit of spying upon those whom he feared : "As for me, he saddled me with a man called Taschereau, who followed me everywhere, even to the tables at which I was a guest. . . ." The hilarity of the audience increased, and the old clown, greatly cheered by his success, would have gone on in this vein indefinitely if Tallien, feeling that the general anger was weakening, had not interrupted his gasconades "to bring back the discussion to the real point."

Robespierre had already flung himself on to the tribune : "I shall be able to bring it back . . ." he cried. The relentless bell and many wild voices stopped him ; he shrank back. He would not be allowed to speak ; on no account must he speak. Tallien crushed him, slashed him, tormented him, buffeted him with mortifying insults : "This man whose virtue and patriotism have been so much vaunted, this man

hid himself on the 10th August and did not appear till three days after the victory. . . . At the time when our troops were in a critical position this man, in order to slander his colleagues, deserted the Committee of Public Safety, who saved our country without him. . . ." Standing there disgraced, with his back to the wall, panting for breath under the storm of insults and curses, the unhappy man uttered a roar, and then, like a madman, dashed furiously up the steps of the hall, as though seeking for a hiding-place. "Death! Death!"¹ he shrieked. A voice² answered: "You have deserved it a thousand times!" And he repeated, as if in a dream, begging for the final blow: "Death! Death!"

The decree of accusation was proposed in all the turmoil. The whole Assembly, rising to their feet, acclaimed the motion in a unanimous transport of enthusiasm. Maximilien, rallying his forces, cried hoarsely: "President of assassins! . . . For the last time, let me speak. . . ."³ "You have heard him, citizens!" said Barère pointedly to the public in the galleries, who had at first been inclined to favour Robespierre, but turned against him gradually as his position became desperate. From floor to ceiling the immense hall resounded with a deafening uproar; the overheated atmosphere was suffocating.

Driven to frenzy, the trapped demagogue shook his fist and shouted invectives that no one heard; the president placed his hat on his head, and instantly the storm died down. The decree ordering Robespierre's arrest was put to the vote and passed unanimously, with a great cry of *Vive la République!* *Vive la liberté!* hurled like a curse at the pariah of whom none said a word in defence. But yes—first there was his brother. Bonbon sprang to Maximilien's side, seized his hand, and begged to die with him. "Put it to the vote!" cried a merciless voice⁴;

and the arrest of Robespierre the younger was at once decreed with applause. Then a group of men were seen struggling and quarrelling ; the colleagues of Le Bas were holding him back by the coat-tails, and he was fighting. "And I too ! I too ! I will not share in the disgrace of that decree !" He freed himself, and went to stand beside his two friends. His arrest was voted without discussion ; the Convention was taking its revenge with the frenzy of one who has been terrified but breathes again. And now Fréron was speaking. He "rejoiced to see the *Patrie* and liberty at last rising from their ruins." "Yes, the brigands are triumphing," sneered Robespierre bitterly, having apparently recovered his insolent inflexibility. His brother, still shaking with agitation, threatened the speaker : "Before the day is over I shall have stabbed a scoundrel in the heart !" Fréron, disdaining him, uttered the names of Couthon and Saint-Just. A fresh decree of accusation was greeted with fresh shouts of joy.

All was over : the battle had lasted for three hours. The Assembly, to show that "the incident" was closed, pretended to listen to a report on the supplies assigned to the country's defenders : it was considered "majestic,"¹ and worthy of the Roman Senate, to return to work without giving another thought to the terrors of the past. But every eye was fixed upon the five proscribed men, who remained close to the tribune. Maximilien was sitting in his usual place, and his brother was beside him. An usher was seen to go up to them and hand them a duplicate of the decree of accusation. Maximilien took the paper, glanced through it, laid it on his hat and went on talking to Bonbon. The mere sight of him terrified his conquerors, for one of them complained that "the conspirators defiled the precincts of the Convention." Robespierre answered in the calmest of tones : "We

Robespierre's Rise and Fall

were waiting for the end of the . . ." Alarming cries of anger rose: "To the bar, Tyrant! To the bar!" It frightened them to hear his voice again. . . . The bar was the imaginary boundary of the sacred precincts. For a deputy to *pass the bar* was the symbol of exclusion, of final detachment. The president made a sign to the ushers; but they hesitated, being afraid; no one could tell what the morrow would bring forth. The tribunal being packed with his devoted followers Robespierre might be acquitted, as Marat once had been, and brought back in triumph to his seat in the Convention by a delirious mob. In default of the ushers some gendarmes were fetched, and showed more temerity. One of them took Couthon on his back. "Let us go out in a body," whispered Robespierre; "it will make more effect."¹ The gendarmes pushed them out, and disappeared with them into the low gallery assigned to petitioners.

Many of the spectators, as they watched the fallen tyrant disappear, already suspected that with him the Revolution, too, was passing away.

VI

THE NIGHT OF THE TENTH

AN unheeded but comical incident took place during this famous sitting. We have seen that the Committee of Public Safety towards mid-day sent the usher Courval to the Hôtel de Ville, to convey to General Hanriot and the national agent Payan an order to appear instantly before the Convention, to report on the situation in Paris. Courval had been usher to the Assemblies since the opening days of the States General, and was therefore an official of much experience. Having served the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies as well as the Convention, it is plain that nothing could astonish him any more. Yet the 9th Thermidor must have left an ineffaceable memory in his mind. On reaching the Hôtel de Ville, he boldly presented himself to Hanriot, gave him the summons he was carrying and asked for a receipt. A receipt! Hanriot, who was already drunk, roared with rage: "Go to the devil! At a time like this there's no question of receipts. Go and tell your infernal ruffians that at this moment we are discussing here how to purge them, and they'll see us soon enough. . ." As Courval did not insist, and was quietly going away, the Commander-in-Chief of the Parisian army called to his orderlies: "Keep that fellow here! You will answer for him with your heads." Hanriot was fond of drinking, but he was not malicious in his cups, and towards three o'clock in the afternoon he began to relent. Releasing his prisoner, he gave him these instructions: "Don't

forget to tell Robespierre to be firm, and tell all the good deputies not to be afraid ; we are going to deliver them from all the damned traitors who sit among them." So Courvol set out again for the Tuileries. When he reached the Convention the battle was at its height, but he thought it his duty to inform the president of the ill-success of his mission. He had hardly opened his mouth to speak when Thuriot, ringing his bell, burst out in a fury : " Go to the devil ! Leave me in peace or it will be the worse for you ! " ¹ The usher must have mourned the far-off days of the States General, and the mincing manners of the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé.

At the very time when Courvol was receiving this second rap over the knuckles Héron was setting out from the Committee of General Security to secure the person of Hanriot, whose arrest had just been decreed.² Héron was accompanied by two trusty agents, Riggogne and Pillé, the latter being the man whose *guardian-devil* protected him from every danger. In the Place de Grève there was a picket of cavalry and a battery of guns ; at head-quarters the staircases and passages were crowded with officers of every rank and all the services. Héron threaded his way through the throng until he found Hanriot, who was haranguing in a room crammed with officers. In a loud voice Héron imparted the Committee's decision to the General, whose only answer was to point " with the gesture of a sultan " to the audacious emissary of the Convention and his companions, and call upon the gallant soldiers who surrounded him : " I command you to kill that rascal instantly, and then our country will be saved once more. This is the day that . . . three hundred rascals of the Convention are to be exterminated. For long enough now patriots have been tyrannised over, and rogues have been sending them to prison to save the nobles and the priests ! . . . "

He ended with the frenzied peroration : “ Stab them ! Stab all three of them ! I must be rescued on the spot ! ” The aides-de-camp, drawing their swords, sprang forward ; but Hanriot had already rushed at Héron and was shaking him by the hand like an old friend, embracing him tenderly and praying that they might not be parted.¹ Then, curbing his emotion, he went into the next room and re-appeared with a paper in his hand : “ You deserve to die,” he announced ; “ I am sending you to prison ; your sentence will be passed to-morrow.” Héron and his two acolytes were taken under a strong guard to the police-station in the Rue du Bouloï.

It was undoubtedly at that moment that Hanriot first heard of Robespierre’s arrest, for he mounted his horse and, followed by some aides-de-camp—among whom was Deschamps the hosier, the temporary house-owner at Maisons-Alfort—dashed off to the assault at the Convention. Unfortunately, in the transports of his valour he missed his way and rushed at a frantic gallop in the direction of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, a perfectly peaceful district, as it happened, entirely unconscious of all that was taking place. Great was the amazement of the inhabitants, therefore, at the sight of these horsemen, who had apparently been routed and were now flying at full speed towards Vincennes, shouting as they went : “ To arms ! The knaves, the ruffians, are winning the day ! ” The people went back into their houses more frightened than fortified by this method of rousing their courage. Presently they saw the return of Hanriot, who, when restored to the right road, hurried back to the Place de Grève, took away with him the gendarmes posted before the town-hall, and still galloping, shouting, swearing and spreading the alarm, made his way by the Rue Saint-Honoré to the Committee of General Security.

This Committee did not hold its sittings in the Palace of the Tuileries itself, but in a large house that stood quite close to it and communicated with it by means of a covered way.¹ It was to this house that Robespierre and his four companions had been taken when the Convention broke up ; and they were eating their dinner there when suddenly, at about half-past five, they heard a great uproar—the noise of hurrying feet upon the stairs and the knocking of swords against the steps. The door was roughly pushed open and Hanriot appeared. With an impetuosity that did more honour to his ardour than his strategy, he had left his gendarmes in the street and burst into the house, followed by Deschamps and one other ; and scattering ushers, clerks, and bewildered office-boys as he passed, he now darted into the room where the police were guarding the men he had come to save. But the door closed behind him. He and his two acolytes were seized, bound with cords and disarmed. He was dragged, fuming with rage but quite helpless, to the Committee of Public Safety.

An ever-increasing crowd surrounded the palace—trooping into the courts and over the terrace and about the foot of the great amphitheatre erected for the Feast of the Supreme Being. It had been kept standing with a view to the celebrations in honour of Bara and Viola, which were to have been held on the morrow, but had been postponed to a later date by order of the Convention on account of the turn of events. The people in their desire for news stood about in groups in the sweltering heat, swept by currents of scorching air and clouds of dust. In the precincts of the palace all was quiet ; the sitting of the Convention was suspended. A little before six o'clock Le Bas was led away to his house by the agents of the Committee of General Security, to be present at the affixing of the seals.² At about seven o'clock

Hanriot, still bound with cords, crossed the courts, guarded by gendarmes who were taking him back to the Committee of Security ; the bystanders hooted as he went past. Soon afterwards it was heard that the Assembly had resumed its sitting. It was a melancholy moment, for the news was disastrous ; the Commune had risen and was in league with the Jacobins ; the tocsin was ringing at the Hôtel de Ville ; drums were beating to arms in the sections, and the populous quarters were rising. A considerable armed force was posted in the Place de Grève. The municipal authorities released Payan, Nicolas, Taschereau and others—everyone whose arrest had been ordered by the Committee of Public Safety. The situation was tragic ; at any moment the Convention might be attacked in the palace by the revolutionary army ; their only defenders were the grenadiers on guard and a hundred and fifty undisciplined men from the Hôtel des Invalides.¹

The Committee of General Security took the precaution of removing the prisoners. With the exception of Hanriot, who was kept under supervision, they were all sent away ; Couthon was taken in a cab to the prison of Port-Libre² ; Saint-Just to the prison of the Ecossais ; and Robespierre, escorted by the usher Filleul and two gendarmes named Chanlaire and Lemoine,³ went—also in a cab⁴—to the prison of the Luxembourg, his brother and Le Bas being taken to La Force. Élizabeth Le Bas, in a state of miserable anxiety, arrived there with a trembling heart two hours later ; she had loaded a carriage with some linen, a mattress, a folding bed and a blanket, to save her dear Philippe from the discomforts of the prison bed. In front of the prison an unruly crowd had gathered ; some delegates of the Commune were releasing the prisoners. From a distance Élizabeth saw her husband emerge ; he was on his way to the Hôtel de Ville,

whither he had been summoned. He took Élizabeth's arm and tried to comfort her, entreating her to go home . . . and as they walked "he gave her a thousand instructions with regard to their little Philippe, quite recently born : 'Nourish him yourself ; inspire him with the love of his country ; be sure to tell him it was for her that his father died. . . .'" He was steadfast and sad ; she was weeping, pressing close to him, sobbing at each *farewell* on the lips of her beloved. Finally, by way of the Rue du Martroi, they reached the Place de Grève and exchanged a last kiss. "'Live for our son ; inspire him with high principles, as you well know how. Farewell, my Élizabeth, farewell !'"¹ He tore himself away, mounted the steps of the portico and disappeared in the throng that blocked the entrance of the town-hall. She had a long time to wait,² among the guns and horses of the troops massed before the old municipal palace, which was illuminated, as on days of festival, with a line of little lamps burning on the cornice of the first storey.³ With its narrow central doorway, its two wide arches yawning beneath the great high-roofed pavilions and immense chimneys that flanked the delicate façade, its wealth of sculpture and statues, its gargoyles, its slender campanile, whose bell, as it rang the tocsin,⁴ seemed like the feverish pulse of the tumultuous city, the Hôtel de Ville, a marvellous structure of the sixteenth century, rose in all its venerable grace at the end of the irregular little *place*, in a frame of crooked gabled houses with crumbling and bulging walls. From the depths of the tortuous streets bands of armed men were constantly emerging, and breaking out into loud cheers when they saw the seven lighted windows of the great hall, where the municipal body was holding its sitting.

Since six o'clock in the evening⁵ the Commune had been legislating amid all the uproar, despite the



THE OLD HÔTEL DE VILLE.

Watercolour by Raffet. *Print Room of the National Library.*

fact that it knew very little about the course of affairs. Where were the proscribed deputies ? Where was Hanriot, that indispensable man ? Kept prisoners by the Committee of Security, it was said. Coffinhal, vice-president of the Revolutionary Tribunal and an active follower of Robespierre, offered to go and fetch them. Taking some artillerymen with him he started off at about eight o'clock to the quarters of the Committee of General Security, crossed the courtyard like a whirlwind, broke open the doors and found no one there but Hanriot. That much-confused general was hardly released from his bonds before he began cursing at the gendarmes who had allowed him to be captured,¹ after which he mounted his horse and rode off to the Carrousel, where his gunners had been waiting since three o'clock for definite orders. He had but to make a sign, and the Convention would be lost : the deputies were paralysed with agitation, and were offering their necks to their murderers. With the exception of Carnot, whom nothing disturbed, and who was sitting at work by himself,² all the members of the Committees had deserted their posts and had taken refuge in the assembly-hall.³ Collot was presiding ; and he warned his colleagues that the quarters of the Committee of Security were in the ruffians' hands, and that "the moment of death had come."⁴ It was a solemn, sinister hour. Into that huge and sombre hall—lighted only by some lamps, and two chandeliers hanging from the papered ceiling, and the high, four-branched torches that stood on each side of the tribune⁵—the sounds of the disturbance without came muffled. The deputies had drawn together in groups, or were wandering about as they talked ; several were asleep⁶ ; no official discussion was attempted ; from time to time, through some citizen who arose from the shadows of the bar, or some colleague who had ventured as far as the anterooms,

they heard news of the preparations for the expected attack—Hanriot was haranguing his troops ; the numbers of the attacking force were increasing ; guns loaded with grape-shot were trained on the palace.¹ The Convention, whose only weapons were decrees, outlawed the insurgents and their confederates. To be outlawed was to be condemned without a hearing, to be sentenced to death without even the faint chances of the trial. Hanriot, Robespierre, Le Bas, Saint-Just, the whole of the rebellious Commune—all were outlawed. But of what use were such penalties against sedition running riot ?

It was half-past nine, however ; and night, as torrid as the day, was now quite fallen. Yet Hanriot made no attack. At his side staggered Damour, *officier de paix* for the Section des Arcis, too drunk to stand upright, and clasping to his heart the cords that had bound his general. “Here they are—these cords are worth more to me than a civic crown—I would not part with them for a million.”² Hanriot, for his part, was still making speeches. The truth is that neither he nor anyone else dared to take an irremediable step. The insurrection had no leader ; no one would take the responsibility of firing the first shot, and the battle consisted of speeches, oaths, and galloping about. Then suddenly Hanriot cried *Right-about-face !* and took all his troops back to the Hôtel de Ville, where he was received as a conquering hero. Robespierre the younger and Le Bas were there ; but where was Maximilien ? What had become of him ? We know the answer now. When he reached the prison of the Luxembourg at about half-past seven, followed by “two or three thousand loafers,”³ the concierge refused to open the door : the orders of the Commune were “to receive no prisoner.”⁴ Maximilien made his two gendarmes take him to the Mairie, formerly the dwelling of the First President, in the precincts

of the Palais de Justice, where he arrived at about nine o'clock in the evening. The Citoyenne Lescot-Fleuriot's maid-servant had been conscious since the morning "that there was a great deal of bustle going on," but knew nothing of the reason; then at night-fall she heard in the Rue de Jérusalem, which led to the Mairie, "shouts of applause and cries of *Vive Robespierre!*"¹ The commissioners of police hastened to open the door of the cab, and Robespierre "bounded out of the carriage without touching the step" like a man beside himself; "he held a white handkerchief glued to his mouth and rushed into the courtyard"; he was "blanched and quite prostrated." The commissioners received him with the liveliest demonstrations of friendship, clasping him in their arms, and holding him up as they led him away to their office. A man employed on the premises, who had gone to the window, overheard one of them saying: "Come, don't be afraid; are you not with friends?"² The gendarmes who had accompanied him were at once imprisoned, on the grounds of having "laid hands upon the friend of the people."

Robespierre was determined to leave this safe refuge no more: it was in vain that the Commune despatched a deputation to him with an urgent summons: "Your counsel is needed. Come instantly."³ He refused to move. It was on his account that Paris had been incited to rebellion, and his intention was to wait at a safe distance until events had been brought to a legal conclusion. The Commune insisted.⁴ It is evident that the great desire of all concerned was to share every kind of responsibility, and to be personally as little compromised as possible. A strong detachment of cavalry, therefore, was sent off to release Saint-Just from the prison of Les Écossais,⁵ and he had just arrived at the Hôtel de Ville. The presence of Robespierre was then earnestly desired;

and hectoring Hanriot, always indefatigable, again mounted his horse, galloped to the Mairie, took possession of the Incorruptible, and bore him off to the Commune, where his entrance was greeted with delirious applause and "reiterated embraces."¹ No one was missing now but Couthon, who, in the peace and quiet of his prison of Port-Libre, was also desirous of nothing but to be forgotten. By Robespierre's orders he was fetched by gendarmes, who only persuaded him to go with them after a good quarter of an hour of discussion. Finally he was brought to the Hôtel de Ville, to his great annoyance, at about half-past one in the morning.²

These were but sorry dictators; no sooner had they arrived than the energy of the municipal body, so enthusiastic at the beginning of the struggle, seemed to flag. It was an occasion for "improvising thunder," and nothing at all was done. Robespierre made a speech; and, enthroned in an arm-chair beside Lescot-Fleuriot the mayor, listened to the vows of fidelity of various deputations from the Sections—an opportunity for many more speeches. A few blows were also exchanged. A certain vendor of old clothes, named Juneau, having so far forgotten himself as to hint that the Convention was not entirely composed of scoundrels, received rough handling; his hat was seized, his coat was torn, and he was led before Robespierre, who passed a summary sentence on him: "Kill him! Kill him!"³ A communication was sent to the armies, which were far away and took no interest, fortunately, in the events passing in Paris. Then Robespierre, being weary of all the racket, begged to retire into the next room with his friends. They took counsel together there, but came to no decision. Were they waiting till day to march against the Convention? Did they hope that it could not do without them and would dissolve on its own initiative, or

that the people would carry the task through by themselves ? The people, however, were like Citoyenne Lescot's maid-servant ; they were aware that "there was a great deal of bustle going on," but understood nothing of its causes. How could they choose between two parties who both called upon them "to fight factionists, tyrants, and the enemies of liberty"? The words were worn out by over-work, and had no longer any power. And, moreover, nothing was decided —the aimless tramp from the Carrousel to the Place de Grève, the interminable time of waiting outside the Hôtel de Ville, had disconcerted the most resolute. What were they waiting for ? There had been an attempt to hold them together by distributing wine¹ ; the gunners had been drinking at Hanriot's expense at a wine-shop in the Rue du Mouton.² But everyone was tired ; they were sure that nothing would happen before daylight, and little by little, singly at first, then in groups, and finally by platoons, the majority of the soldier-citizens went back to their quarters. At one o'clock in the morning Hanriot, on coming out of the Hôtel de Ville to encourage his troops, found the square almost empty. Discharging a few volleys of oaths he returned to the house without attempting to arrest the desertion of "his brave brothers in arms."³

When she saw the revolutionary army retiring the Citoyenne Le Bas, who had apparently waited in the Place de Grève in the hope of seeing her husband again, came to the conclusion that nothing decisive would occur before the morning. On her way home she met, on the Quai de Gesvres, a procession that terrified her : three deputies on horseback were proclaiming the outlawry of the conspirators.⁴ For the Convention had recovered itself as soon as Hanriot had ceased to besiege it. One of its members, Barras, was appointed general in command of the armed force,

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and being quickly supplied with a plume and a sash¹ he started upon his campaign. He had only four thousand men at his disposal, all of whom were reactionary or moderate citizens, and he merely aimed at covering the retreat of the Assembly "towards the heights of Meudon."² At the same time a dozen deputies volunteered to parade the streets to encourage the bewildered populace. Each of them armed himself with a sword and, like Barras, threw a tricoloured sash about him; then, preceded by drummers and ushers bearing torches, and surrounded by police, agents of the Committees, and gendarmes, they went the round of the cross-roads, reading aloud the proclamation and the decree of outlawry. The effect was dramatic: passing from one halting-place to another they drew near at last to the Hôtel de Ville, and it was they who met Élizabeth Le Bas upon the quay.³ Supported by Barras's troops, who were also making for the Place de Grève in two columns, they reached the square at last a little before half-past two in the morning. It was entirely deserted.⁴ A few *sectionnaires* had gathered under the two archways of the town-hall, as though to guard them, and the central doorway was obstructed by a crowd, whom the throng in the porch prevented from entering the building. Defenders there were none; or none, at least, that could be seen. But the seven tall windows of the great hall, and the two windows of the Salon du Secrétariat⁵ adjoining it, made clear-cut patches of light in the darkness. The Commune, then, was still sitting. It was at that moment receiving a deputation from the Jacobins, among whom were the carpenter Duplay⁶ and Didiée the locksmith, two of Robespierre's associates.

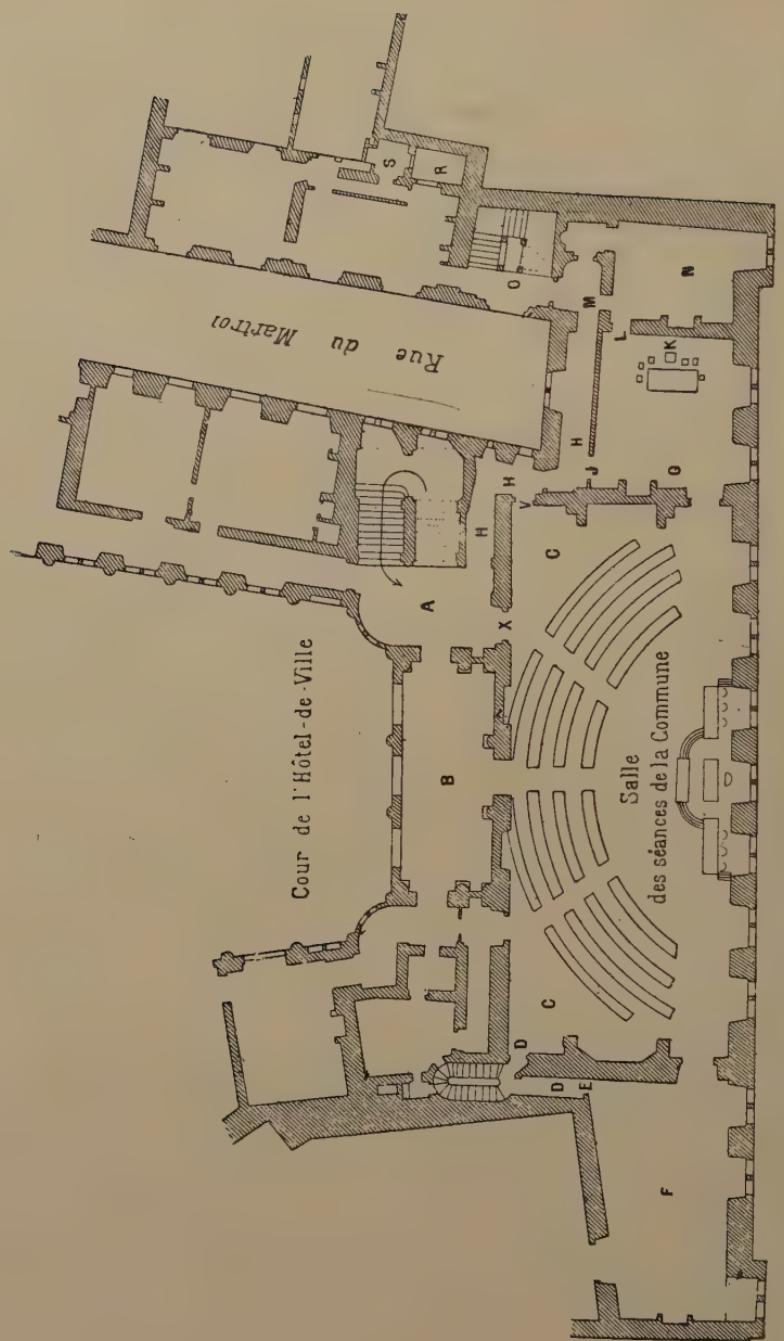
The procession of Conventionists, on emerging from the quay into the square, drew up at a respectful distance. The Hôtel de Ville might possibly be mined;

its occupants would surely defend it stoutly. While the emissaries of the Convention were discussing their course of action a man was seen to be standing outside one of the windows of the secretaries' office, thirty feet above the ground, on the narrow cornice of the first storey, among the flickering lamps. He was holding his shoes in his hand, and seemed to be hesitating ; he passed backwards and forwards upon the perilous ledge, and then stood still. The voice of a crier proclaimed the outlawry of the rebels—and with a spring forward the man flung himself down. . . . He fell on the people who were crowded about the entrance, overturned two of them,¹ and lay shattered on the steps. It was Robespierre the younger—Bonbon.² Dulac, an agent of the Committee of Public Safety, who was one of the Conventionists' escort, saw him fall ; and gathering from this tragic suicide that the insurrectionists were at bay he forced his way through the crowd, slipped into the house, and reached the grand staircase, followed by a few determined men. They pushed aside the people with whom the steps and the vestibules of the first floor were crowded, but the door of the hall in which the Commune sat was blocked by an impassable throng. At that moment Bochard the porter, who had hurried upstairs at the summons of a gendarme, entered the Salon du Secrétariat by a door at the back, less obstructed than the other. He saw Le Bas lying dead upon the floor, and at the same instant Robespierre shot himself with a pistol, piercing his own cheek and barely missing Bochard, upon whom the wounded man fell, spattered with blood, "in the very embrasure of the door." At the sound of this shot Lescot-Fleuriot, who was presiding at the meeting of the Commune, sprang from his chair, rushed to the door of the Secrétariat, and returned pale and trembling. Instantly "a cry was heard on every side : 'Robespierre has blown out his

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brains !'" and it was at this moment that Dulac and his men, sword in hand, succeeded in pushing their way through the crowd and entering the hall of the Commune. About thirty of the municipal body were still there, "turned to stone," and were captured without resistance.¹ Dulac pressed on into the Secrétariat by way of the winding passage that led to it—now blocked with humanity and ringing with a confused noise of shouts, bangs, blows, and collisions. From the threshold of the room he saw Robespierre lying on the floor "close to the table," beneath which Dumas had hidden himself, and was rolling in his fingers a bottle of *eau de mélisse*.

The Conventionists held the Hôtel de Ville in their power. In all the passages the hunting of the rebels was being carried on amid indescribable confusion; no one knew who was captured and who escaped. Saint-Just, unmoved as always, with his hair hardly ruffled, gave himself up without a word.² Hanriot had disappeared. A working painter named Laroche, as he was mounting the grand staircase, saw a man being carried on the back of another, who set him down at the head of the stairs and left him there like a compromising parcel. It was Couthon. Laroche spoke to him. "Kill me," said the cripple. The workman refused. "Then," begged Couthon, "put me on the little staircase over there." Laroche pushed him to it, and mounted guard over him. "Take me up to the next storey," groaned Couthon. It was very dark in the retreat to which Larouche had dragged him, and where now he relentlessly held him prisoner. For an hour the tortured cripple listened to every sound, hoping to discover what was happening in the hall of the Commune. A great shout of *Vive la Convention!* made him shudder. "I am lost!" And when the arrested municipal officers were led away he said again: "I am lost! Give me your knife. . . ."



Place de grève

THE HOTEL DE VILLE, NIGHT OF THE 9TH THERMIDOR.

- A. Grand staircase.
- B. Vestibule.
- C. Great Hall, where the Commune held sittings.
- D, E. Dark passage leading to the hall formerly called the Queen's (F).
- G. Large Salon de l'Egalité or of the Sécrétariat, called also the Hall of the Zodiac, on account of the decorations representing the twelve months of the year, carved by Jean Goujon.
- H. Winding passage.
- K. Probable position of the table and chairs.
- L. Door opening into the small Secretary's Office.
- N. Small Secretary's Office.
- M. Door opening into the passage from the small Secretary's Office.

O. Small staircase, by which Bochard the concierge must have gone up. At the door M (or perhaps at the door L), Robespierre must have fallen against him, after firing his pistol in his mouth. "Leaving the Salle de l'Egalité, in the passage," says Bochard.
S. A lavatory. Was it here that Hanriot, according to Barras' account, took refuge before throwing himself into the little yard R, where he was found wounded?
Dulac's course, then, is traced on this plan by the letters A, X, C, V, H, J, G, and Bochard's attempt at reconstruction on which this before the Revolution is based was drawn given by the town to the occasion of a fête (National Archives of the N. Seine.) No plan has been found of any date nearer to that of the Revolution.

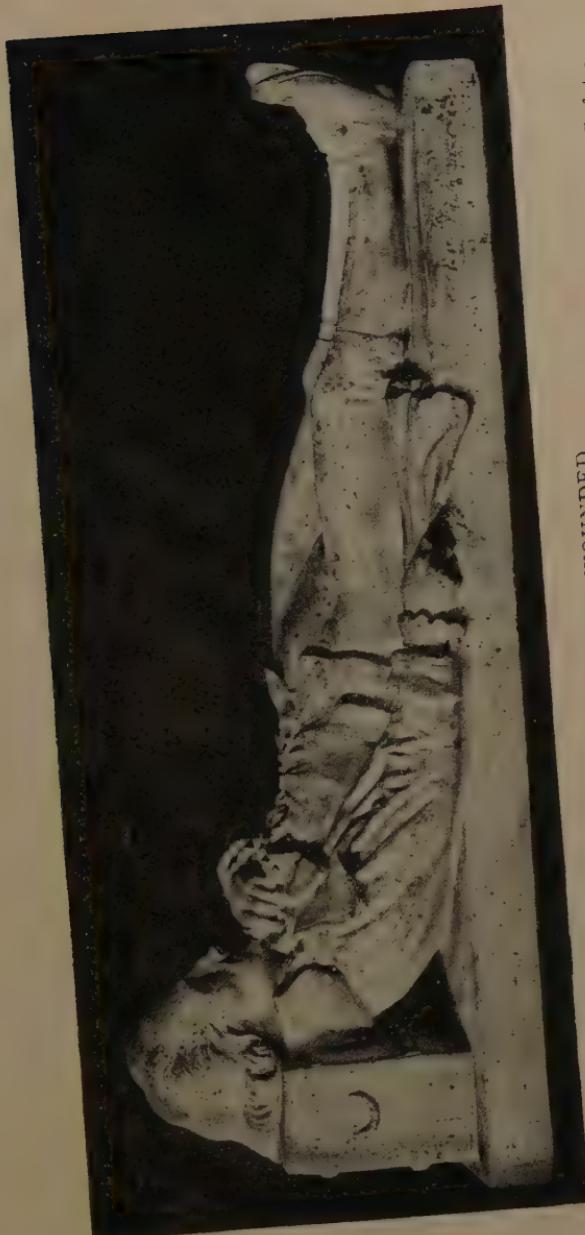
Then Laroche, being certain that the victory no longer hung in the balance, cried out : " This way, comrades ! I have got Couthon here ! " " Wretch, are you giving me up to them ? " But Laroche was pitiless : " There is no *bon Dieu*, you must die! . . ." The men ran up, bringing lights ; one of them discharged his pistol at the crouching paralytic ; the bullet struck him in the forehead ; his blood spurted out over the breeches of Laroche, who stole away.¹

When day dawned the " list of casualties " was drawn up. The body of Le Bas was taken to the cemetery of Saint-Paul, where he was buried at seven in the morning ; two grave-diggers, a father and son named Quatremain, were the only persons to sign the death-certificate.² Robespierre the younger, " almost lifeless " after his fall on to the steps of the Hôtel de Ville, was picked up and carried on a chair by several men to the committee of the Section de la Commune, in the Rue des Barras, where four surgeons diagnosed, in addition to a fractured pelvis and several serious contusions on the head, a disturbing condition " of weakness and anxiety." None the less, he was questioned. He protested " that he had constantly done his duty zealously at the Convention," and that he was " as pure as nature itself, and so was his brother " ; and he denounced Collot-d'Herbois and Carnot as enemies of the people and conspirators. In his pockets were found his *carte de député*, some papers, a little key, and sixteen *livres*, five *sous* in paper money.³ Though the doctors declared his last hour was near, the dying man was carried to the Committee of General Security. Couthon, who had fainted, was waiting on a stretcher to be taken to the Hôtel-Dieu, where his wound was to be dressed.⁴ Maximilien Robespierre, his face covered with blood, was laid on a board and carried to the Tuileries.⁵ He reached the Carrousel at about half-past two in the morning. The

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Convention had been sitting *en permanence* since some time before noon on the previous day. Charlier, by chance, was occupying the chair¹ in place of Collot, who was exhausted. "The dastardly Robespierre is there," he said. "Do you wish him to be brought in?" "No, no!" cried the Assembly, suddenly awaking from its torpor on realising that its victory was complete. Orders were given to set the tyrant down in the rooms of the Committee of Public Safety; and his bearers laid him in the anteroom, stretched "on a mahogany table,"² with his lolling head supported on a deal box. In the next room his late colleagues, having recovered from their terrors, were restoring themselves by drinking heavily.³

In the crowded anteroom, to which many had come to gaze at him, Robespierre lay on the table as motionless and livid as a corpse. His eyes were closed, his hat and cravat were gone, his shirt hung open and was stained with blood, as were also his violet-blue coat and nankeen breeches; his white cotton stockings had fallen down over his ankles. At the end of an hour he opened his eyes; his wound was bleeding copiously; he staunched the blood from time to time with a little bag of white leather that he had kept in his hand—the case that had held his pistol probably.⁴ Round his table the sarcastic crowd—his courtiers of yesterday—observed his smallest movements. Many of them insulted or mocked him. He looked fixedly at them, especially the employés of the Committee whom he recognised. Some of them were moved with pity and placed paper in his fingers in default of linen, with which to cleanse his wound. At times he was shaken with convulsive movements, and turned his eyes towards the ceiling. The dawn came, revealing all the beauty of the gardens that had seen him in his glory; a fiery sunset foretold a day still hotter than the day before. At about five in the morning a military doctor



ROBESPIERRE WOUNDED

and lying exposed to the eye of the public in the anteroom of the Committee of Public Safety.
and lying exposed to the eye of the public in the anteroom of the Committee of Public Safety.
Collection of M. Henri Lavedan, of the French Academy.

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Original work by Chaudet (1763—1810).

who was passing was asked to dress the wound. Together with the surgeon-major of the grenadiers of the Convention he washed the face of the injured man, which was greatly inflamed and bruised up to the eyes ; the left cheek was penetrated at a point one inch from the corner of the mouth. Several teeth and some fragments of the broken jaw were taken from the mouth ; but the surgeons found "neither the bullet nor any trace of its exit," and, "in view of the smallness of the wound, concluded that the pistol had only been loaded with shot."¹

What hideous agony he suffered ! He who found the sorrows of his childhood and the mortifications of his early career so hard to endure and had struggled so persistently to avenge himself for them, in the hope, perhaps, of ridding his embittered mind of such lacerating memories, was now lying there in the dust, derided, scorned and miserable, tasting, drop by drop, the supreme humiliation of final defeat, the terrible bitterness of his life's failure, the shame of his last enterprise, wherein he had shown—he, so sure of his genius—neither foresight nor ability nor energy nor intuition nor political penetration. He had been great only in the eyes of the common herd, had been feared only by cowards, praised only by hypocrites ; and his name would pass into history as that of an ambitious mediocrity, the bungling, quarrelsome, jealous leader of a faction. One hour, one single radiant hour, had been his whole compensation for all these cruel mortifications—the hour when he saw Paris at his feet, while bands played and trumpets blared ; and that very fête, into which he had dragged the name of God, though God most certainly was absent, had marked the first step towards his fall. His whole calamitous life, with all its torments and its joyless days, all its bitter fights and hatreds, remains an enigma to us. What mysterious aim can have been

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hidden under that pretence of bringing back the age of gold by means of the Terror and the scaffold ? He can tell us nothing now : we shall never know the nature of his chimerical dream ; we may dispute about him for ever without discovering whether he was the tool of an occult sect, or a Utopian, or a monomaniac, or merely an envious savage, the victim of some atavistic rancour. Those who regard him as a pioneer and a benefactor of the people bring to mind the words once uttered, in his disillusionment, by a democrat : " The people would be very happy if they had not so many friends ! "

The story of the tragic end has been told a thousand times. He was carried in a chair¹ from the Tuileries to the Conciergerie. A child on his way home from school met the horrible procession on the Pont-Neuf, when the bearers, to recover their breath, had set down their burden at the end of the Quai des Lunettes opposite to the space where the statue of Henri IV stands. The crowd was hooting at the wounded man. His head was wrapped in a blood-stained napkin ; and at each outburst he turned it towards the spot whence the cries came, responding to them with a shrug of his shoulders.² At the old prison, into which his entrance brought hope and salvation, he was thrown into a cell to await his sentence. " The turnkeys trampled him underfoot."³ He seemed to awaken from a long dream⁴ and made a sign, it is said, that he wished to write ; but a gaoler answered him with a taunt.⁵ What confidence did he wish to make ? What secret was he anxious to reveal ? Was he seeking to gain time, to invoke a final curse upon his enemies, or—who knows ?—to beg for absolution from a priest ? . . .

At the tribunal the scene was dramatic but short.

Only twenty-two of the confederates had as yet been captured ; and since all of them were outlaws nothing was necessary but to establish their identity, a formality that was carried out by two employés of the tribunal. Four stretchers were carried into the court—Robespierre lay on one, his brother on another, with crushed back, half dead ; Couthon on the third ; and on the fourth Hanriot, who had at last been found in a little courtyard of the Hôtel de Ville, into which he had flung himself from a window on to a heap of manure.¹ The others were Saint-Just, Payan, Dumas —arrested in this same tribunal on the previous day when actually in the president's chair—Simon the shoemaker, several other members of the rebellious Commune, and Lescot-Fleuriot, Mayor of Paris. When the last appeared, Fouquier-Tinville, who was his friend, made a dramatic and dignified *gesture* : he laid down his scarf and left the court, leaving the task of calling over the names of the prisoners to his substitute Liendon.² When this formality was ended the twenty-two, without any trial whatever, were handed over to the executioner. We know nothing of their demeanour during those terrible moments when the condemned were stripped of their jewellery and money, and were made ready for death. In the yard of the Palais de Justice three carts were waiting ; and when, at about six o'clock, the half-dead prisoners were placed in them, there burst from the densely packed crowd a great clamour of applause and joy—a sound that never left their ears till their last moment came. The Convention had decreed that, to add solemnity to the occasion, the execution should take place in the Place de la Révolution, where the scaffold had not been erected since the Feast of the Supreme Being ; and throughout the journey from the Conciergerie to that spot a terrific tumult of cheers, songs, jests, shouts of joy and curses rose from the mob.

Never, not even at the Feast of Victories, had such a throng been seen in Paris. Every open window was filled with smiling faces, every balcony with groups of happy people ; in the streets every hat was waving in the air and every countenance shone with joy. Men congratulated one another as they passed ; a universal sense of contentment beamed from every face. Not a heart was moved with pity for the miserable creatures going to their death ; on the contrary, their horrible appearance added to the merciless enthusiasm. Hanriot, with slashed cheeks and one eye out of its socket, was in the first cart, beside the younger Robespierre, who lay stretched out like a corpse. In the second was Maximilien, seated beside Dumas, with his head bowed, covered with a cap, and wrapped in blood-stained cloths. Couthon was lying in the third cart among the feet of the others ; all of them were gloomy, dismayed, silent, crushed by the joy of the populace. The mob was so great that the carts were forced to draw up several times ; the journey lasted for an hour. They halted opposite the house of the Duplays. Some women were dancing in a ring before the door,¹ and an urchin, dipping a broom into a butcher's bucket, sprinkled the closed shutters with blood.² The fatal Place de la Révolution was seething with a turbulent mob when the carts drew up at last at the foot of the scaffold. Couthon was the first to die ; the others followed one by one ; the time was long ; for half an hour at least, perhaps more, Maximilien endured the horror of waiting. While his companions were being guillotined he was laid on the bare ground, with his fine blue coat tied across his naked shoulders. He was the last but one to mount the scaffold. When the executioners, to leave his neck bare, tore away the bandage with which his whole head was swathed, a howl of pain was heard, so piercing that it reached the furthest corners of the Place and struck horror into

every heart; and Robespierre was seen for the last time, drenched in blood, his mouth gaping, his jaw hanging. Lescot-Fleuriot died last.¹

A few minutes later Tallien announced to the Convention, which was still sitting *en permanence*: "The heads of the conspirators have fallen. . . ." A thunder of applause prevented him from saying more. When he was able to continue speaking he did so after the manner of the *deus ex machina* in a schoolboys' play: "Come," he said, "let us join our fellow-citizens; let us share in the common joy. The day of a tyrant's death is a Feast of Brotherhood." At this suggestion the sitting ended "to the sound of applause and shouts of joy."²

The suppression of the conspiracy did not end with the death of the leaders; on the following day seventy members of the Commune, who had been arrested at the Hôtel de Ville on the morning of the 10th, were executed without trial. Since the institution of the Revolutionary Tribunal so large a batch had never yet been seen; and on the 12th a dozen municipal officers, who had contrived to hide themselves during the first search, went to the guillotine. Several of Robespierre's disciples were included in these hecatombs—among them Boullanger, Lubin, Lumière, Desboisseaux, the painter Cietty and Nicolas the printer, all of whom have figured in this narrative. Coffinhal was not taken until five days later, having escaped from the Hôtel de Ville and baffled his pursuers. Disguised as a boatman, he took refuge in the Île des Cygnes, where he remained for two days and nights with nothing to eat but the bark of trees. Driven by hunger, he begged for shelter at the house of a man who was under an obligation to him; the man let him in, then turned the key on him and ran

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to fetch the guard.¹ One member of the Commune, an artist named Beauvallet, saved his head by hiding in the lofts of the Hôtel de Ville, where he lived for several days on the soot from some old lamps that were stored there, and the stagnant water lying in the trough of a grindstone.² Deschamps, Robespierre's "courier," and host at Maisons-Alfort, was caught in the neighbourhood of Chartres,³ brought back to Paris, and guillotined in the Place de la Révolution.⁴

No one in Robespierre's circle was allowed to escape. The Duplays were imprisoned on the 10th at Sainte-Pélagie. In her certainty that she would go to the scaffold on the morrow Madame Duplay killed herself in her cell ; she was found on the morning of the 11th hanging from a bar of her window, dressed only in her shift, with a red handkerchief round her head and her feet tied together with a black ribbon. From her convulsed fingers a ring of plain gold and another of rubies were taken ; in the pockets of the dress she had thrown upon the bed were found two pairs of spectacles, a few silver and copper coins and some "memoranda of expenditure." Madame Duplay was a good housewife to her very last breath.⁵ So great was the hatred felt for Robespierre's supporters during these days of deliverance that the aristocrats imprisoned in "Pélagie" could see nothing in the death of this unhappy woman but a subject for jests. One of them spread the news thus : "Citizens, I announce to you that the Queen Dowager has resorted to rather an unfortunate act of violence." "What is it ? What has happened ?" cried the two Duplays, father and son, who had heard nothing. "Citizens, this is a day of great mourning for France ; we have no longer any princess !" The carpenter did not understand ; and the chronicler adds : "The thing that amused us most in all this was that that very evening Duplay fils gave ten francs to a turnkey to

find out for him what had happened to his mother, whom he believed to be at liberty.”¹ It is a fact that Madame Duplay’s daughters, at all events, were long ignorant of their mother’s suicide, though not of her death; for three months later one of them, when begging for her freedom, wrote to the Committee of General Security: “ My mother died of grief. . . . ”²

It was poor Élizabeth who suffered most. After leaving her husband in the square opposite the Hôtel de Ville during the night of the 9th Thermidor, she returned home “ almost out of her mind ” and lay for two days stretched “ on the floor, powerless and unconscious.” On the morning of the 10th a woman dressed in black and hidden by a large veil asked to be allowed to speak to her by herself; she had come from Le Bas, she said. She was not admitted. On the 12th Philippe’s dog Schillichem reappeared; he had been absent since the 9th, and came in panting for breath with his tongue hanging out. “ The poor beast had spent the time on his master’s grave.” Very soon the Committee of Security arrived and took Élizabeth and her little boy, aged five weeks, to the Prison Talaru, whither her sister Éléonore was brought to join her. Neither of them had any money, and they were confined in an attic with no window but a skylight. In the night Élizabeth would leave her garret and, lighted by a little lantern, go down to the watering-trough of the gaol to wash her infant’s linen, which she dried under her mattress. In Brumaire of the year III her prison was changed for that of Saint-Lazare, and here, too, Éléonore was with her. “ Never, my good sister,” wrote Élizabeth forty years later—“ never as long as I live shall I forget your devotion to me and to your little nephew; my gratitude will be eternal.” These two women always behaved like heroines; in their *dossier* there is not a hint of any self-abasement on their part towards their con-

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querors ; they never were false to the past. The widow of Le Bas bore her husband's name with dignity and would never change it for another. Later on she married a brother of her dear Philippe, Charles Le Bas, who died in 1829 ; and thus, until her death at the age of eighty-nine, in 1859, she proudly remained "the widow Le Bas."

Duplay himself contrived to be forgotten. He was moved from prison to prison with his young son Maurice and his nephew Simon, the man with the wooden leg ; but he made no complaints, preserved a discreet silence, and waited for the passing of the terrible storm. At the end of five months the carpenter was taken from his cell to help in making an inventory of the furniture and personal possessions of his friend, Nicolas the printer, and of Maximilien Robespierre his lodger. So Duplay, stricken by many losses, saw his house again, empty and desolate, disordered by official searches—the house where he had lived with his own folk about him, the house wherein the smallest object roused the memory of so much happiness and so many vanished faces. He was obliged to take part in the seizure of Robespierre's clothes, linen, and books, which were taken away "to the common dépôt for all the effects of the condemned."¹ There is still in existence a list of the articles in this dépôt, a *macabre* document that it is impossible to touch without a shudder ; but, with some important exceptions, the objects are enumerated collectively : "90 waistcoats of all kinds ; 23 pairs of pantaloons, some good, some bad ; 42 pairs of breeches ; 12 over-coats, one of them being *vi de chourat* (*vitchoura*)²—without any reference to their owners.³ We only know, through second-hand information, that the sale of Robespierre's possessions on the 15th Pluviôse of the year III produced 39,400 *livres*, his portrait alone, it is said, being sold for 15,000 *livres*.⁴ In a "report of

the sale of effects sent from the Revolutionary Tribunal, 25th Thermidor, year IV," and auctioned in a room of the Maison Soubise, the building now occupied by the National Archives, there occurs the statement that "two cloth coats, one blue and the other maroon . . . belonging to the two Robespierres condemned to death, were put up at 100 francs and knocked down for 855 *livres*." Withdrawn from this sale was "a gun found in Robespierre's room and belonging to Duplay, who succeeded in proving his ownership."¹ Was this the gun that Maximilien intended to take to Choisy on the 10th Thermidor for the coursing of the hare that the Vaugeois were keeping for him? As for the blue coat, it was undoubtedly the fine coat made for the Feast of the Supreme Being, sent back from the cemetery of Monceau after the bodies of the victims had been stripped and buried. The transport of the bodies and their burial cost 193 *livres*, besides seven *livres* given to the gravediggers for themselves; this included "the purchase of quicklime, a layer of which was spread over the bodies of the tyrants lest at some future time they should be deified."²

Duplay's name had been included with the rest in the prosecution by Fouquier-Tinville and the Revolutionary Tribunal, but he had the prudence to say nothing; owing to certain favourable evidence he was acquitted, but he was kept in prison.³ He was vaguely compromised afterwards in the conspiracy of Babeuf, but again came out unscathed from the long trial at Vendôme. When once more at liberty he returned to his work; and though impoverished by his long imprisonments he succeeded, by dint of many economies, in recovering his prosperity sufficiently to buy the house he had so long held on lease. He possessed other houses in Paris, too, and land in several different districts.⁴ He died in 1820 at the age of eighty-four.⁵

His daughter Sophie, as we have already seen, had

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been married since 1789 to a lawyer at Issoire named Auzat. When the events of the 9th Thermidor took place she was in Belgium, where Auzat, owing to the influence of Robespierre, held the post of Director of Military Transports to the Army of the North. They were both arrested, as was also Victoire Duplay, who had gone to Belgium to spend a holiday with them. They were taken to Paris. Auzat indignantly protested, and shamelessly disowned Maximilien, to whom he owed his lucrative position ; he printed a *Petition to the National Convention*,¹ in which he referred to the fallen despot in the style popular at the moment : "Such was the influence of this tyrant's malevolent spirit that he must needs, after his death, cause the arrest of nearly as many innocent people as he caused to die during his life." To secure greater safety he even repudiated his wife's family : "Auzat and his wife . . . were disliked by all Robespierre's circle and by Robespierre himself." But, in spite of the cajolery he lavished on the victorious Thermidorians, Auzat remained a long time in prison. In Brumaire of the year IV he again demanded his liberty, while his wife was still petitioning the Committee of General Security, at that date about to resign its functions.²

At the same time as the Auzats there was arrested in Brussels a man whose name has already been mentioned and who deserves some attention : Calandini the cobbler, whom Robespierre brought from Arras in 1791, and who, according to Guffroy, was the watch-dog of the Incorruptible. He was given a commission in the Army of the North, and lost no time in the lower ranks ; the National Almanach for the year II, indeed, mentions him as an adjutant-general³ : he was chief of staff of the third division. Calandini was certainly a frequent visitor to the Maison Duplay, for in August, 1793, we find Le Bas writing from Hazelbrouck to his betrothed : "Do not forget to remember

me to the Citoyenne Chalabre, to Calandini and to Robespierre." He was arrested, then, on the 16th Thermidor, and remained at Lille till the 30th of the same month, and appeared before the Committee of Security on the 7th Fructidor. He was examined and set free on the 10th.¹ But his military career was damaged, and there is nothing to show that he won any battles. He was discharged under the Directory and settled with his wife and child in Paris, where he lived quietly for several years on a pension of twelve hundred francs. The imperial police kept an eye on him, for he frequented the houses of "ill-disposed" people; and in 1807 he was even imprisoned for break-fasting in the company of some other retired officers who had been in the army of the year II, and were accused of talking sedition. His house was searched, and "some revolutionary emblems and a portrait of Robespierre" were found in it. He was sent under surveillance to Auxerre, and for the next three years it seemed that he had learnt wisdom; but when his pension was reduced to six hundred francs he became exasperated and excited a riot. It failed; and the ex-general and impenitent Robespierrist was sent to the Château d'If as a state prisoner. In December, 1811, forestalling Mallet—who a year later merely copied him—he announced to the little garrison of the fortress by means of a placard in manuscript that the Emperor "had been overthrown in the name of the Nation" and that he, Calandini, had been appointed dictator and provisional governor of France, and was charged "by the extraordinary and secret council of the electors of the people of France to put in force once more the Constitutions of 1789, 1790, and 1791."² After being so long in close confinement he had gone mad. Under the Restoration he again bombarded the Government with obscure ramblings on the subject of liberty: the conversations he had heard long ago at

the Duplays' table, when it was frequented by the famous Jacobins, haunted the troubled spirit of this poor man. In Louis XVIII's time he lived at Marseilles, where his completely illiterate wife, Marie-Thérèse Govinelle, kept a close watch over him, declaring that he was neither malicious nor dangerous.

Simon Duplay, the carpenter's nephew, and himself a carpenter, had gallantly enlisted at the age of eighteen, on the 1st November, 1791. After Valmy, as we have seen, he returned to the Rue Saint-Honoré with a wooden leg and a pension of fifteen *sous* a day. He was intelligent, "ardent, and full of ability,"¹ and acted as secretary to Robespierre, whom he repudiated, like so many others, after the events of Thermidor.² This did not save him from being imprisoned with the rest of the family; he was narrowly watched in the Prison des Madelonnettes, and was only set free at the end of a year. We find him again, in the year VII, in the employ of the Ministry of General Police, with two brothers of Le Bas as his colleagues.³ He served with distinction in this ministry under the Empire, and he remained there as chief assistant-clerk of his department until 1827, when he died. By his wife Marie-Louise Auvray he had two children, one of whom was the father of the eminent professor, Simon Duplay, member of the Academy of Medicine, who died only recently.⁴

It is interesting to observe that several of the descendants of Duplay the carpenter have been remarkable in one way or another. His son Maurice, the schoolboy of the year II, was, when he died in 1847, Director of the *hospices* of Paris; his granddaughter, the child of Madame Auzat, married a partner in the most famous firm of publishers in France. And everyone knows that Philippe Le Bas, the orphan of Thermidor—educated at Juilly, and a private in the Imperial Guard—became an eminent historian and

Latin scholar, and by his works on epigraphy won the distinction of a chair at the Institute. Under the Restoration he was the tutor of a young Frenchman, at that time in exile, whose name was Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte ; it was the son of a Conventionist and a follower of Robespierre who formed the mind of the future Napoleon III. As for Éléonore Duplay, she voluntarily remained always without descendants and without history. Was this because she who had been called Robespierre's *fiancée*, she whom Dubois-Crancé had nicknamed, to Danton's great delight, "Cornelia the Shaving," considered herself bound, by these weighty links with the past, to the memory of Maximilien ? She remained resolutely faithful, and never married. It is plain that she deliberately sought to be forgotten, for her name is nowhere to be found—except on a grave in the cemetery of Père Lachaise, where we may read : Françoise-Éléonore Duplay, died in Paris, 28th July, 1832, at the age of 64 years. It is to be regretted that such a woman as Éléonore, who was said to be notably intelligent and artistic—she was a pupil of the painter Regnault—did not, like her sister Élizabeth, write a record of her family. It is true, however, that confidences of this sort are valuable only if completely sincere, and sincerity is a quality that can hardly be demanded of witnesses so prone to apology.

Charlotte Robespierre is a striking example of such witnesses. She left behind her the *Mémoires* that have so often been quoted ; she scattered flowers over her brother Maximilien's memory ; she credited him with every virtue. She speaks of her despair on hearing of the events of Thermidor : "I rushed into the streets. . . . I sought my brothers ; I learnt that they were at the Conciergerie ; I ran thither and asked to see them ; I implored with clasped hands ; I dragged myself on my knees before the soldiers. . . . They

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pushed me away. . . ." etc. This heartrending picture has little resemblance to the truth, for, far from seeking out Maximilien and Bonbon, Charlotte had fled, on hearing of their arrest, from her lodging in the Rue Saint-Florentin to the house of a certain Citoyenne Béguin in the Rue du Four-Honoré, where she concealed herself under the name of Carrault, the name of her grandfather, the brewer of Arras. She was arrested there on the 13th, and instantly declared that, "after being turned out by her brothers, she had nearly been their victim," and that if she had had any suspicion "of the infamous plot that was being hatched she would have revealed it rather than see the ruin of her country." And the woman Béguin unhesitatingly repeated everything that Charlotte had told her about the house of the "infamous Duplays," the frequent visits of Fouquier-Tinville, and the methods adopted in drawing up the lists of the condemned.¹ Surprise has sometimes been expressed that the Directory, the Imperial Government, and the Government of the Restoration should have paid a pension to Charlotte Robespierre. They were paying for her repudiation of her brother. The assertion of the Incorruptible's own sister that he was a monster was well worth the yearly sum of two thousand francs which Charlotte received until her death in 1834. During her last years the old woman was described as "well preserved, holding herself very upright, and dressed in a manner rather like the fashion of the Directory, without any sort of luxury, but with fastidious cleanliness. She spoke little and seriously . . ."² She lived, still under the name of Madame Carrault, in the remote neighbourhood of the Jardin des Plantes. At the sale of her possessions after her death, a sale that realised 328 francs, a portrait of Robespierre was valued at forty *sous*. A collector gave twenty *sous* for a portrait of the Empress Josephine.³

What must they have felt, these survivors of the dreadful drama, when they were old and broken, and awakened from their dreams, and forced to conceal their names, if ever some accidental meeting in the streets of Paris brought them unexpectedly face to face? If, for instance, Charlotte ever again saw Fouché—if it were only in a procession during some imperial festivity—after he had become Duc d'Otrante and wore plumes on his head and ribbons round his neck, she must surely have remembered the days when he paid court to her and asked for her hand. She must surely sometimes in the streets have crossed the path of Éléonore or old Duplay, neither of whom she ever forgave, or have met one of the carpenter's former associates, such as Taschereau, who in 1823, when he was eighty-one years of age, lived alone in a mean lodging on the Quai des Orfèvres. The police kept their eyes on him as "a former secretary of Robespierre" and noted that he "read bad journals."¹ It is a great temptation, in view of these dramatic contrasts, to linger too long over the closing years of the people who lived through the storm, and to make some attempt to discover the point of view from which they looked back, in the calm moderation of old age, at the far distant past. But such an inquiry would be out of place. To end the survey of Robespierre's immediate circle, we need only return for a moment to Choisy-le-Roi and briefly observe the storm of rage that broke over the Vaugeois family and their tools as soon as the 9th Thermidor was over. They were all arrested: Jean-Pierre Vaugeois, Madame Duplay's brother, the late mayor of the little town, with his wife, his son, and his three daughters. Denunciations against them poured into the Committee of General Security, who found it necessary to send Blache, one of their ablest agents, to Choisy, to collect all the depositions of the inhabitants, to whom it was a real

deliverance to be rid of these arrogant tyrants. Strong in their relationship to Robespierre's landlord, they had treated Choisy like a conquered country. Every one of their associates was sent to a Parisian prison—down to Louveau, the cook whose help was sought by Vaugeois when Robespierre was his guest—down to Simon the fiddler, who played for the Demoiselles Duplay when they danced in the salons of the Marquise de Pompadour. Even Fauvelle was arrested; even the brothers Laviron, Madame Duplay's cousins, were seized at Crêteil, the peasants of the neighbourhood having accused them of being the *satellites du tirran*. Certain facts that are not without interest were brought to light there. Le Bas "and others" had come on several occasions to visit the mother of the Lavirons; on the 10th Thermidor the elder of the brothers had prepared at his house a fine repast at which Robespierre himself was to be present. He was expected in vain throughout the day—we know why. Laviron, being unable to deny that there had been very rich fare in his house that day,¹ made the pitiful excuse that the 10th Thermidor was the Feast of Saint Anne, and his intention had been to celebrate, not the final triumph of Robespierre, but the festival of the *ci-devant* patroness of the Guild of Carpenters. This unconvincing excuse was evidently not accepted, for nearly a year later we find Laviron, still a prisoner, being transferred from the Luxembourg to the citadel of Cambrai.²

It is surprising that, in the two voluminous reports drawn up in obedience to the victors of Thermidor, Courtois, when enumerating the crimes of Robespierre's faction, should have made no use of the meetings of the conspirators in the houses of Fauvelle and Vaugeois. But Courtois was a follower of Danton, and perhaps preferred to say nothing about the "orgies of Choisy," which were at first attended by Danton

and certain venturesome members of his circle ; it was a delicate subject. It is equally surprising that Vadier should not have triumphed vociferously on hearing of the arrest of Vaugeois's sister, the woman Duchange, a sexagenarian who had been paralysed for the past fifteen years and was so feeble that it was necessary to imprison her in the Hospice de l'Evêché. The incident offered Vadier a fine opportunity of enlarging his famous report ; for it was this woman Duchange, it will be remembered, who was the hostess at Choisy of the *Mère de Dieu* and her prophet Dom Gerle ; it was through her good offices that Robespierre—according to certain witnesses—received from the New Eve the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The sibyl of the Rue Contrescarpe, who had been confined for over two months in the Prison du Plessis and had been saved from the scaffold by Robespierre when, as we have seen, he opposed her being sent to the tribunal, was now for that very reason in danger—her protector having fallen—of being executed as an associate of the tyrant. But, in the outburst of universal goodwill that followed the events of Thermidor, Paris would not have endured the sight of the poor old woman and her obscure companions being dragged to the guillotine. For the Terror had come suddenly to an end, not by the will of the victors of Thermidor, but by the irresistible force of public repugnance. The law of the 22nd Prairial was repealed, the Revolutionary Tribunal was reorganised, the prisons were thrown open and gradually emptied. Catherine Théot and her initiates, however, were still confined, for Vadier could not, without discrediting himself, admit that the great conspiracy which his insight had baffled was no more than a grotesque farce, and that its ending was to cost the lives of thirty innocent persons.

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The *Mère de Dieu*, therefore, remained in prison, complaining of nothing and demanding nothing, either because her mind was definitely deranged or because, as is more likely, she regarded this imprisonment that fulfilled her prophecies as a favour granted by heaven. For she had foretold that the "great stroke" that was to announce her rejuvenation and her transformation into an immortal would befall her "on the hill of the Panthéon, in a house close to the École de Droit." Now, Le Plessis fulfilled both these conditions. The prison building was the old college of that name, enlarged by a considerable portion of the *ci-devant* Collège Louis-le-Grand, which had been fitted up in the spring of the year II to accommodate the overflow from the crowded Conciergerie. It was an annexe of Fouquier-Tinville's "larder"; and even before the workmen were out of the building it was crammed with prisoners. The women occupied Le Plessis; the men were in Louis-le-Grand; and the control of this immense gaol was in the hands of the concierge Haly, who was married to the charming daughter of Lebeau, head-gaoler of the Conciergerie—the young woman who had been the last personal attendant of Queen Marie-Antoinette.¹ A host of turnkeys, gate-keepers, and supervisors obeyed this couple of ill omen.

Héron and his myrmidons had brought the *Mère de Dieu* and her followers to the Plessis in the evening of the 17th May. The prisoners in the women's building, at that hour bolted into their cells, heard "a strange commotion"; blankets were being spread on the floor of the corridors, and there the new arrivals slept. On the following morning when the bolts were drawn the prisoners, whose curiosity was roused, went in search of the new-comers. They were discovered sitting quietly in the warders' room, "gathered round a withered, pale, silent old woman," whose "continuous trembling and numerous sores bore wit-

ness to her sufferings." She was encouraging her companions by pressing their hands affectionately ; they looked at her with emotion and respect. They all answered with an absolutely indifferent *yes* or *no* the questions put to them by the prisoners ; but one of them was more communicative, and began to rant against the priests, the convents, and the Catholic Faith. Pointing to *the Mother*, she added "She does not believe in those mummeries ; but she knows the past and the future. . . ." In this group of poor women, for the most part old and unattractive, the young and pretty Dove stood out in striking contrast — "fresh as the rose whose name she bore."¹

The gaoler Haly showed the greatest consideration for Catherine Théot and her followers ; he lodged them in the building called La Police, where they were able to carry on the practices of their curious cult by themselves. Nevertheless, they communicated with the other prisoners, expressing themselves "in brief, obscure, and prophetic terms." In Prairial one of these women said to the Comtesse de Vassy—daughter of the Marquis René de Girardin—who was imprisoned as an *agitatress* ; "In two months' time we shall not be here." "I think you are right," answered the Comtesse ; "Fouquier-Tinville will shorten our term of imprisonment." "No ! He and his tribunal and his jury and his judges will not be in existence. Everything in France will be changed." "Will the throne be restored then ?" "No." "Will the kingdom be seized by foreigners ?" "No, not that either." Speech, moreover, returned to old Catherine herself. She prophesied "in sententious and excited tones" ; she retailed her oracles to all and sundry—to Haly, to the cook, to the wine-merchant and even to the turnkeys, who laughed at her and abused her without making any impression on her patience or her prophetic frenzy. "I shall not die on the scaffold as you would

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wish," she said ; " an event that will fill Paris with dismay will announce my death." Her incredulous hearers sneered : " It's likely that the disappearance of an old baggage like that would make such a noise!" ¹

The days passed and the prediction seemed to be fulfilled. At the end of Prairial, when it was known that Vadier's report demanded the trial of the prophetess, it had appeared as though the threatening reality would give the lie to her prophecies. But nothing came of it.

Every day the carts of the Tribunal came to Le Plessis to fetch an " assortment " of victims.² The ushers called out from the yard the names of the prisoners on the list. At that moment every heart was wrung with agony, every ear was strained in terror. But Mother Catherine never lost her serenity, never seemed to guess that she had been doomed to die on the scaffold. Did she not know it ? Had anyone read to her the famous report that was being so widely circulated in Paris and was making her name celebrated ? Did she even know that her humble name—the name that was once a servant's—had checked the rise of the powerful demagogue and caused him from that moment to start upon his fall ? The tremendous event of Thermidor seemed to leave her contemplative placidity unmoved : if anyone had told her that she had been a factor in it she would not even have understood. She was, indeed, entirely absorbed by the voices she heard : nothing else seemed to interest her, and the attitude of her companions was equally indifferent.

During the weeks that followed, everyone at Le Plessis was hoping and imploring for deliverance. Haly left his door open, so to speak, and every day a large number of prisoners quitted the prison. Catherine Théot paid no attention to the matter. No one interceded for her ; and as she was poor there was no

The Night of the Tenth

advantage to be gained by interfering in her favour. This old woman, to whom nothing was left but life, had no friends but her devout adherents. One morning—it was the 14th Fructidor, or the 13th August, 1794—the old visionary lay stretched upon her pallet in a state of obvious exhaustion : the disciples who surrounded her were anxiously awaiting the great event that was to mark their Mother's attainment of immortality. A little before half-past seven she passed peacefully away. At that precise moment a terrible concussion shook the whole building of Le Plessis, the whole quarter, the whole town ; and at the same time the air was rent by an appalling detonation, reverberating in such dreadful roars that “every citizen thought his house was ruined by lightning.”¹ From one end of Paris to the other windows were shattered, tiles fell in showers and were broken to fragments on the pavement, and woodwork was split. At the neighbouring prison of the Luxembourg all the doors burst open,² but not a single prisoner sought to escape ; everywhere even the bravest were paralysed with horror. Men and women threw themselves upon the ground, half-distraught, to protect themselves from the black rain that fell from the darkened sky—a rain of wood-splinters and fragments of scorched clothes, which beat down upon all parts of Paris, on the Chaussée d'Antin, on the Temple, on the road to Saint-Denis. The gaolers of Le Plessis, who had so long made merry over Mother Catherine's prophecies, ran terrified to the cell in which she lay lifeless, expecting to see her arising from her bed and becoming beautiful and young and immortal for ever, as she had foretold. With the greatest respect they carried her body devoutly into a lower room and, laying it “on a kind of state-bed, placed a great number of lighted wax-candles round the dead woman.” They watched there together in the hope of being present at her

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resurrection, and were quite prepared, we may be sure, to vie with one another in their pious adoration as soon as she gave the first sign of life.¹

This access of mystic fervour did not last. They soon learnt that there had been no miracle, but merely a coincidence. The powder-magazine of Grenelle had been blown up : the dead were counted by hundreds²—some said “by thousands”—and there were already those who held “the aristocrats set free from prison” responsible for the disaster. However that might be, the remains of Catherine Théot no longer deserved to be treated with veneration, and were thrown into some common grave with others: her miserable prison outfit—“a petticoat of printed calico, a red jacket, a pair of pockets, a mob cap, a pair of old stockings”—was taken to the Évêché, where there was a dépôt for the property of those who had been executed or had died in prison. The clerk who entered these articles in the register, being either a wag or a believer, wrote in the margin, instead of the name of their deceased owner: *Mère de Christ.*³

On the other hand, when the inventory was taken of her possessions in her own lodging, a most complete wardrobe was found: linen of the most sumptuous kind, “cambric chemises so fine as to be priceless, very beautiful cotton sheets with no seams, handkerchiefs from India and other precious things,”⁴—which she owed, no doubt, to the generosity of her patroness the Duchesse de Bourbon—eighteen new chemises of very fine linen; caps made up with Valenciennes, Paris lace, and English point; a dozen pairs of stays; grey silk stockings; about twenty muslin fichus, some plain and some embroidered; a *déshabillé* of figured silk; several others of flowered or striped cotton; a petticoat of white silk; a cape and apron of black taffetas; an Indian camel’s-hair shawl; an umbrella of crimson taffetas; two silk parasols, one

red and one green. The list also mentions the blue-and-white arm-chair in which the pythoness uttered her oracles, the platform of crimson Utrecht velvet on which her throne was raised, and a great deal of blue-and-white linen—the traditional colours of the Blessed Virgin—much of which was marked with the initial M. Did this stand for *Mary*? But the most astonishing thing to find in the possession of a woman who called herself the Mother of God was “an ivory rosary.” Did the poor crazy creature address the angelic salutation to herself, then?¹ The citizen-abbé Théot, priest at “Roch,” lost no time in claiming this rich inheritance as the nephew of the deceased and the representative of her sister Louise Cohendier; he proposed to take home all the articles of any value, and especially the silver; he even offered his services as guardian of the seals. But the department of Public Property refused his claim; and indeed claimants arose on every side, for Catherine Théot had had seven brothers and sisters. The publicity given to her name and affairs awoke family affection in the breasts of a quantity of nephews and nieces, who divided the inheritance among them.²

The end of Dom Gerle, the unfrocked monk, was quite without lustre. After six months in prison, of which six weeks were passed “in the pangs of agony,”³ he found himself once more on the pavements of Paris, free, but entirely without resources, and—to add to his difficulties—very much in love. In 1795 he was fifty-nine years of age. No doubt he had been attracted to the den in the Rue Contrescarpe not so much for the satisfaction of kissing old Catherine’s chin as for the pleasure of meeting the pretty Doves. He had hardly left his prison when he married one of them, the elder of the two Raffet sisters⁴; after which he looked for employment under the name of Chaligny.⁵ On the 8th Nivôse, year VI, he was appointed managing

clerk in the third department of the Ministry of the Interior, with a salary of 2,500 francs¹; and there he vegetated for some years, going every day from the Rue Saint-Dominique d'Enfer, where he lived, to his office in the Rue de Grenelle. These facts are accurate, but very scanty. It would be interesting to learn something of the home life of this married couple who had made each other's acquaintance in such remarkable circumstances; to know what memories they exchanged when they discussed their strange past; to know, above all, the secrets hidden in the conscience of the old priest who had gone so far astray, and had felt breaking in his hands every branch on which he had tried to hang his feeble faith. He had solemnly proclaimed the prophetess Suzette Labrousse, who had travelled to Rome to enlighten the Pope by her predictions, had been confined in the Castle of S. Angelo as a lunatic and had announced that she would escape from it when she chose, "and would ascend to heaven in the presence of the whole population." She was, however, prosaically set free by the French invasion, and returned in 1798, much humiliated, to Paris, where she lived in seclusion in the Quartier Montparnasse, embittered by the failure of her prophecies, and searching for the secret of the philosopher's stone.² While still shattered by his first mistake the ex-Carthusian had thrown in his lot with Catherine Théot, who, though flattering herself that she was immortal, had quite authentically died, to the bitter disillusionment of her disciples, whom she had promised that, like herself, they would never die. What can have been Gerle's moral condition after awakening from two such delusions as these? And how great must have been his secret despair when he found himself bereft of his faith but at the same time thirsting for something to believe in! He died in the year X, on the 27th Brumaire,³ leaving his whole fortune—

that is to say his small stock of furniture and 270 francs which he had contrived to save¹—to his widow, who survived him till 1827.²

Of the three men to whom the survival of his name is due—Vadier, Héron, and Sénar—the two last died before him. When Héron was arrested five days after Robespierre's execution he had time to destroy his compromising papers. In Prairial of the year III he was denounced to the criminal court of Eure-et-Loir.³ He believed himself to be lost, but defended himself stoutly, publishing endless broadsheets and pamphlets appealing to the National Convention, the sovereign people, and the whole French nation, protesting the purity of his heart, and pouring out a constant stream of denunciations.⁴ By these means he won the pardon that was proclaimed by the Convention at its last sitting, on the 4th Brumaire, year IV; and having thus cheated the scaffold he settled in Versailles at No. 1, Rue des Réservoirs,⁵ where he died four months later. The wife whom he had wished to send to the guillotine survived him for nearly half a century.⁶

Sénar made acquaintance with as many gaols as his terrifying associate⁷; intreating, the while, to be sent back to Tours, and writing his alarming but valuable *Mémoires* of some of his colleagues on the Committee of General Security, concerning whom his veracity is undeniable, since his statements can be controlled by *dossiers* still existing in the National Archives. At the end of 1795 he returned to Tours, and was regarded with contempt and horror by all the honest folk of that town, where he had once been mayor. He lived in the Rue de la Riche, in a house that stood at the corner of the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Martin: here he had a *salon* on the ground floor, two rooms on the first floor and some lumber-rooms.⁸ Broken, aimless, churlish and “oppressed with fearful memories” as he was, he had neither the taste nor the

time to arrange his possessions in his new dwelling, if we may trust the account of his rooms given in the inventory, according to which everything was in confusion, thrown down anyhow with no discrimination nor care. On the 11th Germinal, year IV, six weeks after the death of Héron, two sisters named Philippe—servants, no doubt—stated that Sénar had died on the previous day at six o'clock in the morning. According to the local tradition¹ he had a touching end: he summoned a non-juring priest and insisted on making a public act of contrition: in the presence of his neighbours, and even of casual passers-by, it is said, he confessed his sins aloud and expressed repentance for them. He died at the age of thirty-six. His divorced wife—who had settled at Poitiers under the name of Félicité Desrosiers, *alias* Monville, with her little boy Mucius Scœvola Sénar—did not disturb herself on the occasion, but merely sent her power-of-attorney.²

Vadier, who in the drama of the *Mère de Dieu* had allotted the actors' parts to Sénar and Héron, keeping the librettist's work for himself, survived his two assistants for a long time. He was hunted by the police—not only of the Thermidorians, but also of the Directory—and was reduced in his turn to concealments and disguises and long pursuits on many roads; and he was also imprisoned and tried as an accomplice of Babeuf; but none the less he had the effrontery to return to his own country, and was ill received there. The inhabitants had not forgotten certain local quarrels that had been settled by the knife of the guillotine: everyone who offended him in the department of the Ariège had ended on the scaffold. When the Empire brought forgetfulness at last Vadier settled in Paris, where Fouché tolerated the presence of his old colleagues, the better to keep his eye on them. Vadier, his first wife being dead, had married his maid-servant, a handsome woman whose opulent curves contrasted with the lean

form and parchment-like face of her husband. The latter—"as big as Saturn and as bony and gaunt as well," with hooked nose, pointed chin and glittering eye—had not lost his unamiable vivacity, but it was a vivacity without words. As he sat, bent in two, and surrounded with potions of every kind, he would from time to time raise his head with its few fluttering white hairs, and give a low chuckle, a dry, harsh sound that vibrated but had no ring in it.

The child¹ who, later on, made this masterly sketch of the old sceptic, was himself the son of a regicide ; he lived among the retired Conventionists who, when night fell, came stealthily to visit his father, slinking in the shadow of the walls, trembling lest they should be recognised. Among them were Amar, Lindet and other survivors of the great committees : but, to the child, Vadier was the most surprising of them all. The old man spoke only in single words, and generally in words of one syllable ; but his gestures, his reticences, his silent sneers all manifested cold, relentless irony. He was negation personified : the enemy of all forms of worship, all religion, all belief. On one subject only he became garrulous : the events of the 27th Prairial, year II, his day of triumph, the day when his sarcasm won its great victory over fanaticism. "When I solved the riddle of Mother Théos . . ." he said one day. At the sound of this introduction Amar took up his hat and departed. "You are running away!" cried the cracked voice of the mystics' persecutor. But Amar had softly shut the door behind him ; and Vadier went on to describe how Robespierre had returned to the paths of bigotry and aspired to make himself high priest. "We know all about it ; you have told us the story a hundred times already !" interrupted the exasperated Lindet. But nothing could check the old Voltairian : he straightened himself in spite of his gout : "When I read my report

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to them . . . you see! . . . fanaticism was crushed by the blow . . . it took it a long time to recover. . . . And Robespierre! Annihilated! Done with! I put an end to him!" And he sank back into his chair with a look of unutterable joy.

But there was one circumstance unknown by the writer who heard these things as a child; and it was this. When the days of the Restoration came and the unconquerable atheist had returned to his great estate in the Ariège, he made his will, and began it with these words: "Having adored the sovereign Creator of all men, and besought His mercy for the salvation of my soul . . ."; and he ended the long statement of his last wishes with a prayer.¹ And when, having been exiled as a regicide, he died in the odour of sanctity at Brussels on the 14th December, 1828, his body lay in state at St. Gudule's, where the clergy of the archbishop's cathedral celebrated a solemn service for the repose of his soul.²

NOTES

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¹ He was born at Saint-Didier-la-Séauve, between Saint-Étienne and Le Puy, on the 22nd Dec., 1736.

² Marie-Françoise Vaugeois was born on the 3rd June, 1734.—*Archives de l'État civil de Crétteil.*

³ L. GRASILIER, *Simon Duplay, secrétaire de Robespierre*, p. 7.

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¹ *Archives nationales*, F¹ 4775⁴¹.

² *Archives nationales*, T 1494². *Registre du Comité révolutionnaire de Choisy.*

³ *Archives nationales*, F¹ 4775⁴¹.

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¹ AULARD, *La Société des Jacobins*, I, xxxii et seq. Rules of the Society.

The *livre* was a coin of about tenpence in value, which was superseded by the franc. (*Translator.*)

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¹ AULARD, *Société des Jacobins*, III, 30.

² AULARD, *ibid.*

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¹ A month later, on the 9th Aug., Robespierre still described himself as living in the "Rue de Saintonge, in the Marais, No. 8," either because he preferred not to mention his actual residence, or because he had not yet given notice of leaving his rooms in the Marais.—*Le Club des Cordeliers pendant la crise de Varennes*, by ALBERT MATHIEZ, p. 332.

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¹ The name was really *Derbobespierre*: it is thus written in the resolution of the Council of Artois admitting Maximilien to its bar.—J. A. PARIS, *La Jeunesse de Robespierre et la convocation des États Généraux en Artois*, p. 35.

² On the 6th May, 1758. François de Robespierre's marriage with Jacqueline-Marguerite Carrault had taken place on the preceding 3rd Jan., the banns having been published once only, two days before. None of the bridegroom's relatives were present at the drawing-up of the contract nor at the religious ceremony.—A. LAVOINE, *La famille de Robespierre. Avenir d'Arras et du Pas-de-Calais*, 21st and 23rd Feb., 1914.

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³ Jacqueline-Marguerite Carrault died 16th July, 1764, aged 28.

⁴ A. LAVOINE. *Documents inédits sur le père de Robespierre. Avenir d'Arras et du Pas-de-Calais*, 17th Feb., 1914.

⁵ François de Robespierre's mother, Maximilien's paternal grandmother, was the daughter of a publican called Poiteau, in the Rue Saint-Gery. She owned two houses in Arras: one in the Place des Chaudronniers, the other in the Rue des Bouchers, as well as some money. The whole was valued at from twelve to fifteen thousand livres.

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¹ It is to the patient research of M. A. LAVOINE, at present assistant curator of the Archives of Pas-de-Calais, that we owe the possibility of throwing light on some facts of the strange life led by Robespierre's father. Apparently Maximilien never alluded to these facts, though we cannot doubt that he was informed of them afterwards. As for his sister Charlotte, she confines herself to saying in her Memoirs (if they be authentic): "Our poor father . . . was inconsolable . . . he was advised to travel for some time to distract his thoughts; he followed this advice and set out; but alas! we never saw him again. . . . I do not know in what country he died. No doubt he succumbed to insupportable grief." It is certain, as we can see, that Charlotte knew more about it than this: her reticence is obviously voluntary.

² Letter from Langlet, *agent national* of the Commune of Arras, to the Conventionist Lequinio. Quoted by J. A. PARIS, *La Jeunesse de Robespierre*, Appendix V.

³ Letter from Langlet, *ibid.*

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¹ A. LAVOINE, *Avenir d'Arras et du Pas-de-Calais*, 17th Feb., 1914.

² *Mémoires* of Charlotte Robespierre, p. 39.

³ ERNEST HAMEL, *Histoire de Robespierre*, I, p. 13.

⁴ François de Robespierre, Maximilien's father, reached a certain degree of eminence at the bar of Arras: he appeared in thirty-four cases in 1763, and in thirty-two in 1764. None the less M. Devienne, a former solicitor on the Council of Artois, in some manuscript notes that have been preserved, declares he "was a poor lawyer in all senses of the word."—J. A. PARIS, 16 n. As for the grandfather, Maximilien de Robespierre, called to the bar of Arras in 1720, his average number of cases in the year was no more than two.—A. LAVOINE, *Avenir d'Arras et du Pas-de-Calais*, 22nd and 23rd Feb., 1914.

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¹ DERAMECOURT, *Histoire du clergé du Diocèse d'Arras pendant la Révolution*, I, 363. Canon Aymé was the author of a *Résumé des preuves de la religion chrétienne*.

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¹ LIEVIN-BONAVVENTURE PROYART, vice-principal of the College of Louis-le-Grand, published after his emigration, under the pseudonym of Leblond de Neuvéglise, a *Vie de Robespierre*, of which a new edition appeared at Arras in 1850, modified and enlarged by another ABBÉ PROYART, who died a canon of the cathedral in 1888 and was the

nephew of the first. The chapter devoted in this second work to Maximilien's days at Louis-le-Grand contains certain details so precise that they must certainly be derived from the notes of the former vice-principal of the college.

² *La Vie de Maximilien Robespierre*. Arras, published by Thery, 1850. Chapters I and II *passim*.

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¹ J. A. PARIS, p. 18. Ernest Hamel, Robespierre's apologist, in his desire to record nothing humiliating to his hero, writes: ". . . they entered the Convent des Manarres at Tournay, where they received the very careful instruction given to young ladies of noble birth in the province."—*Histoire de Robespierre*, I, p. 13.

² *La Vie de Maximilien Robespierre*. Arras, 1850, pp. 19 and 20.

³ The letter is dated 11th April, 1778, when Robespierre, having completed his classical education, was studying law.

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¹ Unless—either from charity or in the hope of attracting the penniless orphan to the religious life—he was lodged with the Capuchin Fathers who occupied a huge convent at Arras, near the old Porte d'Hagerue. (Deramecourt, *op. cit.* I, 189.) This theory would support a tradition, the value of which we have not been able to discover, that Robespierre was a novice with the Capuchins of Arras. This sojourn in the monastery was in any case very short, and could only have taken place during Maximilien's vacations when he was studying at Louis-le-Grand.

² A. LAVOINE, *Avenir d'Arras et du Pas-de-Calais*, 17th Feb., 1914.

³ J. A. PARIS, pp. 18 and 37.

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¹ "With the parliamentary solicitor Nolleau," writes ERNEST HAMEL. This is not possible. Nolleau, who had been a solicitor since 1743, had in 1774 handed over his practice to his son, who in his turn, two or three years later, had been succeeded by Aucante. Now Robespierre could not have ended his course of philosophy earlier than the beginning of 1778. M. Cl. Perroud, in the valuable notes to his edition of the *Mémoires* of Brissot—who was Maître Nolleau's chief clerk in 1774—states that the two future Conventionists, Brissot and Robespierre, could not have been clerks in this office at the same time, and regards as apocryphal the lines in which Brissot describes his young fellow-clerk as being "ignorant, a stranger to every kind of science, incapable of ideas, incapable of writing, and perfectly suited for the practice of chicanery. It is beyond me to conceive," he adds, "how such a person can exercise so great and fatal an influence on the fate of liberty." We may grant, however, the possibility that Brissot, during his third stay in Paris, from 1780 to 1782, when he was about to be called to the bar and was "simultaneously studying law, philosophy, and literature," may for a time have been in Aucante's office and have known Robespierre then. See *Mémoires*, by Brissot, Perroud's edition, I, p. 101. In 1790 Aucante is described in the *Almanach royal* as the successor of Charpentier de Beaumont, and to "the practices of L. Lefebvre and Nolleau junior."

² *La Vie de Maximilien Robespierre*. Arras, 1850, p. 3.

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¹ J. A. PARIS, 41 n.

² National Library. Manuscript. New French acquisitions, 233, fol. 1. *Nomination par Mgr. de Conzié, évêque d'Arras, de Maître Maximilien-Marie-Isidore Derobespierre, avocat au Conseil d'Arras, comme homme de fief gradué du siège de notre salle épiscopale.* 1782.

³ J. A. PARIS, 41.

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¹ *Robespierre et le procès du paratonnerre—1780-84*, by CHARLES VELLAY, docteur ès lettres.

² *L'indépendant du Pas de Calais*, 25th, 26th and 27th Aug., 1891. Article by M. PAGART D'HERMANSART : *Le paratonnerre de Saint-Omer*.

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¹ *Mémoires sur Carnot*, by his son. I, 97. The case was heard before the *Echevinage* on the 23rd Jan., 1784. Carnot's servant won the suit.

² These statistics were drawn up about sixty years ago by PARIS, and were founded on the registers and *dossiers* of the Council of Artois. *La Jeunesse de Robespierre*, Appendix, p. xxiii. Before the *Echevinage*, or Sheriff's Court, Robespierre played a still more modest part : in 1783 he pleaded three times ; in 1784, nine times ; in 1785, twice ; in 1786, not at all. He had four cases in 1787 and five in 1788. *Idem xxiv to xxvii.*

³ ERNEST HAMEL, *Histoire de Robespierre*, I, 91.

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¹ PARIS, p. 151 *et supra* 136-147. ERNEST HAMEL does not omit to say : "There was never a meeting at which Robespierre did not take an active part in the labours of the Academy."—*Histoire de Robespierre*.

² "A voice was heard singing in discordant tones the following verses, in which nothing was wrong but the wrong notes of the singer, M. de Robespierre."—Report of the reception into the Society of the Rosati of M. Fouacier de Ruzé, solicitor-general to the Council of Artois, by M. Carnot, captain of Engineers, 22nd June, 1787.

³ Some lines quoted by J. A. PARIS allude, p. 176, to Robespierre's abstemiousness :

" *L'ami Robespierre
Boit de l'eau comme Astruc.
Est-il aiguëre,
Serait-il aqueduc ?
Ah ! cher Robespierre
Imite donc Leducq ;
Trinque, Robespierre,
Du raisin bois le suc.
Grisons Robespierre
Ne grisons pas Leducq.*"

It should be noted that the pretty lines so often quoted :

" *Je vois l'épine avec la rose
Dans les bouquets que vous m'offrez . . .*"

which Charlotte Robespierre in her *Memoirs*, p. 136, attributes to her brother, are by Beffroy de Reigny, *le Cousin Jacques*, another member of the society. See J. A. PARIS, 9.

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¹ There are letters by Maximilien's grandfather in existence bearing a seal engraved with his arms, the symbolism of which may have been intentional.—J. A. PARIS, 9.

² Liborel's unpublished memoirs, quoted by PARIS, 76 n.

³ Lettre addressée par un avocat au Conseil d'Artois à son ami, avocat au parlement de Douai.

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¹ L . . . , avocat au Parlement et au Conseil d'Artois, à l'auteur d'un libelle anonyme répandu clandestinement contre MM les avocats et procureurs au Conseil d'Artois. PARIS, p. 102 et seq., has discussed these two brochures, now extremely rare. These extracts are taken from his text.

² "Two trusses of hay at five or six thousand francs!"

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¹ This house belonged to the Fetel family.

² Dubois de Fosseux had been guilty of a joke about a certain Delmotte, known as *Lantillette* or *Languillette*, a cobbler who was distinguished throughout Arras for his skill in rescuing buckets that had fallen into wells.—PARIS, 336.

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¹ Note by M. Devienne, formerly solicitor to the Council of Artois.—PARIS, 76.

² Lenglet, Robespierre's *confrère* at the bar, in the Academy, and in the Society of the Rosati.

³ M. Devienne.

⁴ M. Dauchez, a barrister of the Council of Artois.

⁵ A breed of horses that came from Perche, a district in the old province of Maine. (*Translator.*)

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¹ This pleasantry is signed Fourdrin, of Frévent, and is printed in *Le clergé du diocèse d'Arras pendant la Révolution*, by M. DERAMECOURT, I, 547 et seq.

² THIBAudeau, *Mémoires*, 66.

³ "The pavement is black with deputies running hither and thither."—*Mémorial des Etats généraux*.

⁴ Note kindly supplied by M. Lesort, keeper of the archives of the department of Seine-et-Oise, from the National Archives, O¹ 354.

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¹ *L'official, député aux Etats généraux*, by M. LEROUX-CESBRON. *La Révolution Française*, 1920, p. 371.

² On Fridays a carriage left Arras for Amiens, where it connected with the diligence to Paris. See the Almanac of diligences and royal coaches of France for 1787, pp. 57 and 58. The journey from Arras to Paris—46 leagues—was accomplished in about 24 hours.

³ There is a complete list of the garments and toilet accessories with which Robespierre supplied himself in the *Vie de Robespierre*, p. 42, published at Arras in 1850 and already quoted: a book that is

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worthless, however, on account of its bias. The author assures us that he had before him a detailed list of these effects; PARIS, p. 415, gives the list in full. It includes: "two shoe-brushes, a powder-bag with its puff, a box with silk, cotton, wool, needles," etc.

⁴ *L'arrivée des députés, aux États généraux à Versailles*, by Louis BATIFFOL. *Mémoires de la Société des sciences morales, des lettres et des arts de Seine-et-Oise*, XVI, 1889.

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¹ *Mémoires*, by GAUTHIER BIAUZAT, II, 21.

² *L'ouverture des États généraux*. Letter by a Breton deputy, Fournier de la Pommeraye, *Documents sur la Révolution*, by D'HERICAULT and G. BORD, 1st series, 119 et seq. It is well known that Père Gérard's name was used by Collot d'Herbois for the title of his famous almanac. The painter David represented Père Gérard with his four children. See *Le Magasin pittoresque*, XXIX, 1.

³ *Recueil des documents relatifs à la Convocation des États généraux de 1789*, by ARMAND BRETTE, II, pp. 138, 265, 270 and 291. Payen was guillotined at Cambrai on the 21st June, 1794; the two others have left no traces in history, and their names do not even appear in the lists of the *Moniteur*. BRETTE notes that Fleury died on the 24th Nov., 1794.

⁴ Now No. 31 in the Rue Duplessis. *Hôtelleries et cabarets de l'ancien Versailles*, by P. FROMAGEOT. *Revue de l'Histoire de Versailles*, 1907-1908, p. 49.

⁵ "He acted as their guide," writes P. FROMAGEOT, *Revue de l'Histoire de Versailles*, *ibid.*

⁶ "He guided them through the maze of their new life."—*Annales révolutionnaires*, 1912, p. 326. *Robespierre et Charles Michaud, curé de Boury*, by M. EMILE LESUEUR. Seid was the name of Mahomet's first disciple. (*Translator*.)

⁷ A. BRETTE. *Histoire des édifices où sont siégé les Assemblées parlementaires*, I, p. 36.

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¹ RABAUT-SAINT-ÉTIENNE made a mistake—*Précis historique de la révolution française*, I, 291—in saying that on the day that the States-General opened the deputies of the Tiers-État were obliged to pass in "through a back-door," while the King, the Court, and the privileged orders entered by the great door in the Avenue de Paris. The terms of the Convocation are definite: "In the King's name . . . the deputies of the three orders are instructed to appear in the Hall of the States at eight o'clock in the morning, arriving by the Avenue de Paris and entering by the Rue des Chantiers."

² He was twenty-three years old.

³ LA REVILLIÈRE-LÉPEAUX, *Mémoires*.

⁴ Letter of a Breton deputy, *loc. cit.*

⁵ THIBAUDEAU, *Mémoires*, 66.

⁶ *Mercure de France*, 16th May, 1789, quoted by BRETTE.

⁷ *Moniteur*, reprint, I, 84.

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¹ GRIMM, *Correspondance littéraire*, XVI, 129. "The cloud of white plumes that seemed to rise at that moment (when the King gave permission for heads to be covered) over a great part of the hall again presented a scene so remarkable that it can never be forgotten."

¹ *Moniteur*, reprint, XXXII, 610.

² Letter from a Breton deputy, quoted above.

⁴ "M. Coster, one of his principal assistants," says the Breton deputy, who on this point is ill-informed. It was B. Broussonet, permanent secretary of the Society of Agriculture, who read out the greater part of Necker's report.—*Moniteur*, reprint, I, 5.

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¹ This canopy weighed 1857 lbs., and had been used at Rheims at the King's coronation. In the National Archives there is a dossier entitled : "Fears on the part of the *Menus-Plaisirs* department, with regard to the weight of the canopy supplied by the department of the *Garde Meuble*."—BRETTE, I, 28, n^o 2.

² *Idem*, p. 29. Letter from an inspector of the *garde-meuble* to Thierri of Ville d'Avray. The *Moniteur*, reprint, I, 1, observes that "the King took his seat on the throne; the Queen sat at his side, beyond the canopy." But this was doubtless a matter of etiquette.

³ During the early days of the Assembly there was no tribune: everyone spoke without leaving his place. The arrangement of the hall was only changed in June.

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¹ ÉTIENNE-DUMONT, *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau*, quoted by HAMEL, I, 174.

² *Courrier républicain*, No. 274, 14th Thermidor, year II, p. 254.

³ *Journal des Débats et des Décrets*, No. 295.

⁴ *Les révolutions de Paris*, 28th May—4th June, 1789.

⁵ *Courrier de Versailles à Paris*, No. 54, pp. 542, 543, quoted by HAMEL.

⁶ See the note in the *Moniteur*, reprint, I, 182, on the various ways in which Robespierre's name was written at first.

⁷ According to the *Moniteur*, it seems to have been Mgr. Cortois de Bulon, Bishop of Nismes, who read the report to which Robespierre retorted so vigorously.

⁸ If one adopts the version of the *Moniteur*, reprint, I, 56 and 57, the Archbishop had already returned to the chamber of the Clergy when Robespierre apostrophised him.

⁹ See different versions of this incident narrated by ÉTIENNE-DUMONT, and variously interpreted by Mgr. Deramecourt.—*Le clergé du diocèse d'Arras pendant la Révolution*, II, 4, and HAMEL, *Histoire de Robespierre*, I, 107.

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¹ *Moniteur*, reprint, I, 391.

² *Le Point du jour*, No. 102. *Le Moniteur*, reprint, II, 21, 22, records the incident thus: "M. Robespierre proposed an amendment on which he spoke at great length in the midst of much commotion.

. . . He wearied the assembly with his draught of a very comical formula which he insisted on reading when the audience was talking, and ceased to read as soon as there was silence. . . . People, this is the law. . . . This beginning seemed like a burlesque, and he was not allowed to read the end."

³ *Mémoires de Montlosier*, Lescure's edition, 193.

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¹ Letter from Robespierre to Buissart, 24th May, 1789. PARIS, *La Jeunesse de Robespierre*, Appendix C.

² *Idem*.

³ *Mémoires* by BUZOT. Dauban's edition, 43 n.

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¹ PARIS, letter to Buissart, *loc. cit.*

² BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 7.

³ HAMEL, I, 181. Hamel finds this suggestion on a so-called report published in PEUCHET's *Mémoires sur la Police*, II, 338 et seq.—an apocryphal report so obviously based on Charlotte Robespierre's Memoirs that we can put no faith in it.

“ On the 21st Feb., 1793, Robespierre junior—Bonbon—wrote to Buissart, begging him to collect a certain sum : “ It will not be necessary to send the money to me, as it will serve to pay my brother's material debt to you . . . as for the moral debt, my family cannot pay it in this world ; you will always be our creditor.”—*Lettres inédites de Augustin Robespierre à Antoine Buissart*, by VICTOR BARBIER, Arras, 1891.

⁴ National Archives, O¹ 354, notes kindly supplied by M. LESORT, keeper of the departmental records of Seine-et-Oise.

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¹ Quoted by HAMEL, I, 155 n. It is certain that Robespierre frequently visited Necker. Mme. de Staël relates that she once talked to him, in 1789, at her father's house, where, she says, “ he was only known as a lawyer from Artois, with very exaggerated democratic principles. *Considérations sur la Révolution française*, XIX, 3rd part. Quoted by HAMEL, I, 544.

² With exaggerated reticence the decree allowing a salary to the deputies was not mentioned in the reports of the assembly nor inserted in the *Bulletin des Lois*. It appears in a minute among the Archives of the Chamber of Deputies. The members all received their travelling expenses to the amount of 5 *livres* per stage.—E. PIERRE, *Traité de droit politique, électoral et parlementaire*, p. 1324.

³ Twenty-eight deputies voted that the payment should not exceed 12 *livres*; only one voted for 16 *livres*; 286 for 15; 28 for 12; 55 for 20; 19 for 24; and 822 for 18, the sum that was fixed upon. Scrutiny of votes in the bureaux, for this allowance to the deputies. National Archives, C. 27. Doc. 196.

⁴ After a short sojourn at the Archevêché. V. A. BRETE, *Histoire des édifices*.

⁵ Humbert's name figures in the list of Jacobins.

⁶ VILLIERS, afterwards a victim of the *coup-d'état* of Fructidor, published a small volume called *Souvenirs d'un déporté*. It contains several pages relating to his life with Robespierre, which have often been quoted but perhaps do not deserve so much confidence.

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¹ Letter from Augustin Robespierre to Buissart, 9th Sept., 1790. “ I have just discovered some pens, ink, and paper ; believe me, this is not an easy thing on my brother's writing-table. . . .”

² *Le véritable portrait de nos législateurs ou galerie de tableaux exposés à la vue du public depuis le 5 mai, 1789, jusqu'au 1^{er} octobre, 1791,* p. 107. Work attributed to DUBOIS-CRANCÉ.

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¹ The 19th June, 1790.

² *Souvenir de l'abbé Vallet, depuis de Gien à la Constituente. Nouvelle revue rétrospective.* No. 97, 11th July, 1902, p. 35.

³ *Lettres de Mme. Roland*, Perroud's edition, II, 244.

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¹ In a letter to Buissart, dated 1st April, Robespierre informs his friend of the honour he has received. HAMEL, I, 220.

² *Lettres* by FRANÇOIS-JOSEPH BOUCHETTE, deputy in the Constituent Assembly, p. 617.

³ BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*.

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¹ *Révolutions de Paris*, No. 116.

² Allusion is made to this triumphal entry and the part taken in it by Buissart and his wife—the fair Arsène—in a pamphlet of little merit that circulated in Arras after Thermidor, and is entitled: *La Lanterne magique ou les grands conseillers de Joseph Lebon*. Regarding the same incident see Charlotte Robespierre's *Mémoires*, and HAMEL, II, 5 et seq., who had seen a letter written from Arras by Robespierre to Duplay.

³ Though no longer a deputy he had quite given up all idea of returning to his native town. The registers of the District of Arras contain "his request to be relieved from paying his contribution mobilière, because he had finally given up the house in which he lived, in the Rue des Rapporteurs."—LECESNE, *Arras sous la Révolution*, I, 88 n.

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¹ *Moniteur*, reprint, XIV, 430.

² AULARD, *La Société des Jacobins*, II, 440. Sitting of the 10th March, 1792.

³ Pétion adds to the portrait here given: "Desiring above all the favours of the people, perpetually courting them, and making a point of seeking their applause."

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¹ PHILIPPE LE BAS, *L'Univers pittoresque*. France, article on Duplay.

² BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, p. 243. "Duplay died in poverty a few years ago; Robespierre's method of paying his debts was not apt to enrich a man." And elsewhere, p. 40: "Simon Duplay wrote to Robespierre's dictation, and at need served him for secretary. It is not necessary to say that he was badly paid. In those days there were no limits to zeal." If we can dare to believe Fréron, a very dubious witness, Robespierre, when he was living in the Rue de Saintonge, was lodged, fed, cared for, warmed, and served gratuitously by his landlord

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Humbert, himself a member of the Jacobin Club. "Robespierre never spoke of paying him; he thought him sufficiently honoured in having had such a great man as a guest."—*Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, I, 154. One wonders, not without a certain amount of justifiable doubt, how this note written by Fréron and addressed to Courtois, evidently after Thermidor, came to be among papers said to have been found in Robespierre's lodging.

³ Decree of July 24th, 1793.

⁴ SELIGMAN, *La justice en France pendant la Révolution*, I, 359.

⁵ His letter of resignation. *Same work*, I, 456.

⁶ 10th April, 1792. SELIGMAN, *id.*, I, 455-9. According to a note by Treilhard—*Papiers inédits*, III, 277—Robespierre had received from the president of the criminal tribunal, the said Treilhard, a sharp reprimand for his lack of assiduity, whereupon he left the court and at once sent in his resignation.

⁷ DURAND-MAILLANE declares that the *Défenseur de la Constitution* ceased publication "for want of subscribers." As a matter of fact the paper continued to exist till the 10th August, 1792, the date at which its publication ceased to have any object.

⁸ *Anecdotes relatives à quelques personnages et à plusieurs événements remarquables de la Révolution*, by HARMAND DE LA MEUSE.

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¹ In the sitting of the Convention, 25th September, 1792. *Moniteur*, reprint, XIV, 43.

² LOUIS BLANC, *Histoire de la Révolution*.

³ As early as 15th April, 1792, Robespierre was violently attacked at the Jacobin Club by Guadet and Brissot, who definitely accused him of making himself the idol of the people in order to subjugate them the more completely. See AULARD, *Jacobins*, III, 526 et seq. A few weeks later Clootz, who favoured a universal republic, wrote: "King Louis XVI. and King Robespierre are more redoubtable to France than the Austrian and Prussian armies." The Tuetey Collection, IX, No. 2477. On a vague project that was formed as early as 1791 to proclaim Robespierre and Danton as dictators, see A. MATHIEZ, *le Club des Cordeliers*, p. 133 n.

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¹ *Moniteur*, reprint, XIV, pp. 338, 340, 351, 651, 656, etc.

² *Moniteur*, reprint, XIV, 646, 648.

³ *Moniteur*, reprint, XIV, 657.

⁴ *Id.*, XV, 227, 237, 239, 240.

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¹ *Moniteur*, XV, 817. Sitting of the Convention, 27th March, 1793.

² May 26th. AULARD, *Jacobins*, V, 208.

³ *Moniteur*, reprint, XVI, 237. Sitting of 31st May. "Vergniaud, to Robespierre, who is at the tribune: 'Put the motion!'—Robespierre: 'Yes, I am about to put the motion, a motion aimed at you. At you, who, after the revolution of 10th August, wished to send those who made it to the scaffold! At you who have never ceased to provoke the destruction of Paris. At you who desired to save the tyrant! The motion I propose is the decree of accusation. . . .'"

⁴ *Moniteur*, reprint, XVIII, 38. Sitting of 3rd October, 1793.

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¹ He especially accused him of "having spent millions . . . paid forty journals and over a hundred clerks" to dishonour him, Robespierre, by sending to all the municipal bodies the brochure in which Pétion cast him off. See *Réponse à Jérôme Pétion. Lettres de Robespierre à ses commettants*, p. 407.

² *Chronique de Paris*, 9th November, 1792.

³ *Moniteur*, reprint XVII, 256. Sitting of the Convention, 27th July, 1793.

⁴ He was elected president on the 21st August, 1793.

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¹ "The national axe is at rest, and traitors breathe freely"—*Moniteur*, reprint, XVIII, 17. Meeting of the Jacobins, 28th September, 1793.

² Hébert, at the Club des Cordeliers, said: "It is not thieves who are the most to be feared" —(was he trying to plead his own cause?)—"but the ambitious, the ambitious! The men who push everyone else into prominence and hide behind the curtain themselves, who, the more power they have, are but the more insatiable . . . the men who have closed the mouths of the patriots in the popular societies, I will tell you their names. . . ." Quoted by WALLON, *Tribunal révolutionnaire*, III, 34.

³ At Humbert's house—no doubt the Humbert of the Rue de Saintonge, who was now Financial Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁴ "A more certain fact is that the last interview between Danton and Robespierre took place at Charenton—in March, 1794."—P. HARTMANN, *Conflans près Paris*, p. 142. With regard to this dinner and the various accounts of it, see HAMEL, *Robespierre*, III, 467.

⁵ *Moniteur*, reprint, XX, 95 et seq.

⁶ BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 228, 229.

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¹ In a letter that Mme. Duplessis, Camille's mother-in-law, wrote to Robespierre to beg him to save Lucile, she said: "If you still remember our evenings of intimate companionship; if you remember the caresses you lavished on little Horace, whom it pleased you to hold on your knees; if you remember that you were to become my son-in-law, spare an innocent victim. . . ."—*Camille Desmoulins*, by E. FLEURY, II, 285, 286.

² DURAND-MAILLANE, 359.

³ Letter from Hermann to Robespierre, Brumaire, year II: "Dumas tells me he has put before you a scheme for organising the tribunal." *Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, I, 281.

⁴ BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 149. "Robespierre, having sent to their death the deputies both of the Right and the Left, had assumed the power of life and death over all members of the Convention, whatever their opinions. . . . He exercised the same right unlimitedly over ordinary citizens; he had the same power over property, for confiscation was then the necessary consequence of condemnation."

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¹ Diagnosis made by Prof. Brissaud. C. CABAEËNS, *Cabinet secret*, III, 249 *et seq.*

² Consultation on Couthon's case by the Society of Medicine. 30th Dec., 1791. *Id.*, 271.

³ It was Barras who used the expression.—*Mémoires*, I, 178.

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¹ It has been stated, but not proved, that for this famous speech Robespierre demanded and obtained the collaboration of a priest—a “constitutional” priest, of course. Quérard—*Dictionnaire des supercheries*—attributes it to a certain Abbé Martin; Chalot, in a little book that has become rather rare, *Ce bon monsieur de Robespierre*, published in 1852, asserts that the speech was the work of Porquet, tutor to M. de Boufflers.—BEAUREPAIRE, *Le Louvre*, 201 n.

² See the picture of this sitting in AULARD, *Le culte de la raison et le culte de l'Être supreme*, 267 *et seq.*

³ *Moniteur*, reprint, XX, p. 411.

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¹ Their names do not appear in the lists of paid officials of the Committee.—*National Archives*, F⁷ 4406 B.

² “Louis-Julien-Simon Héron, son of Jean Héron, gentleman, and of the Demoiselle Isabelle Costar, born on the 16th March, 1746.”—Official archives of Saint-Lunaire.

³ “Modeste-Anne-Jeanne Desbois, daughter of Étienne Benoît Desbois, gentleman, and of Dame Modeste-Charlotte Helvaut. The marriage was celebrated by an uncle of the young bride, Messire Gilles Helvaut, 12th August, 1777.”—*Archives of the Mairie of Cancale*.

⁴ “M. le comte d'Hector heard this officer most highly praised by the Comte d'Orvillier.”—*Archives of the Ministry of Marine*. Héron's dossier.

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¹ *Complot de banqueroute générale*, by MARAT. This valuable treatise, enriched with notes in manuscript, in which Héron's grievances and successive “misfortunes” are recounted, was communicated to me by M. le comte de Fels, whom I here beg to accept my warmest gratitude.

² Jacques-François Thiboult de Paissac, gentleman-cadet in the 68th Regiment of Infantry; ensign 22nd June, 1778; second-lieutenant 1st June, 1783; lieutenant 1st Sept., 1786; captain 12th June, 1792.

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¹ *Mémoires* of Barbaroux, Dauban's edition, 348. “Héron was there, from Brittany, sincere like all the men of his country, but since then muddled by Marat.”

² *National Archives*, F⁷ 4774⁵².

³ *National Archives*, F⁷ 4774²⁵.

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¹ *National Archives*, F⁷ 4743: “I denounce the man Travaret, formerly banker of the Queen's gambling-table, who makes the most

insolent display of luxury, has just bought an estate worth 1,600,000 *livres*, and has an income of over 300,000 *livres*. . . . Justice and the people's safety require that his person should be secured. 11th Sept., 1793—I declare that Vaudreuil, Grand Falconer to the *ci-devant* King, drew bills of exchange on Pascaut to the sum of 5,800,000 *livres*, when gambling at the bank held by the Queen at the palace of Versailles. . . ."

¹ *Nat. Arch.*, AF' II, 289, folio 11. It was Héron, too, who was sent to Brittany in pursuit of the fugitive Girondin deputies.—*Nat. Arch.*, AF II, 46, 358.

² BUCHEZ and ROUX, *Histoire Parlementaire*, XXXIV, 389.

³ *Moniteur*, reprint, XX, 6 and 7. Sitting of the Convention on the 30th Ventôse, year II. E. HAMEL writes, *Histoire de Robespierre*, III, 439: "The decree that the Convention was surprised into passing was important in Robespierre's eyes, not because of the arrest of an agent employed by the Committee of General Security, in whom he was little interested, but because this decree revealed the tactics of certain men who were disposed to calumniate the best patriots . . . and to obtain disastrous measures from the Assembly by taking advantage of their good intentions." If Robespierre, as Hamel says further on, had "no kind of relations" with Héron, he showed great carelessness in saving such a man without first informing himself as to his moral character and his past.

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¹ *Mémoires de Sénar*, p. 110.

² The name is most frequently written Sénat, and sometimes Senard: but the right form is Sénar. Municipal Archives of Tours. Decease, 11th Germinal, IV.

³ Gabriel-Jérôme Sénar was born at Chatellerault on the 3rd August, 1760. His mother's name was Catherine Sainton.

⁴ Marie-Louise-Antoinette David, daughter of Joseph-Antoine David and Marie-Louise Ceri.

⁵ *Les brigands de la Vendée en évidence*, by Sénar, p. 64.

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¹ CHAPUY, Rigogne, Cayeux, and Lesueur.

² *National Archives*, F' 4775¹⁷.

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¹ Sénar's *Mémoires*, 127.

² BUCHEZ and ROUX, *Histoire parlementaire de la révolution*, XXXIV, 414. Deposition of Vilain d'Aubigny at the trial of Fouquier-Tinville.

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¹ Fouquier-Tinville's trial, No. 111, p. 4, in the publications of the office of the *Bulletin républicain*, Sénar's deposition.

² *National Archives*, T 604-5.

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¹ MARQUISET, *La Célèbre Mademoiselle Lenormand*, 24, 26.

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¹ *Biographie nouvelle des Contemporains*, 1820.

² *Mémoires inédits* by Pétion, published by C. Dauban, XXXVI.

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³ *Journal de Paris*, 3rd Frimaire, year II, p. 1315.

⁴ BERNARD FAY, *L'esprit révolutionnaire en France et aux États-Unis à la fin du XVIII^e siècle*, p. 198, and the *Moniteur*, Reprint, VII, 355 et seq. Sitting of the Constituent Assembly on the 10th February, 1791, in the evening.

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¹ *Moniteur*, Reprint, IV, 621.

² *Une mystique révolutionnaire, Suzette Labrousse*, by the Abbé CHRISTIAN MOREAU, 1886.

³ *Mon portrait historique et philosophique*, by SAINT-MARTIN. See MATTER, *Saint-Martin, le philosophe inconnu*. Second edition, 2.

⁴ MATTER, 90.

⁵ MATTER, 180.

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¹ *Révolutions de Paris*, No. 149, pp. 308, 311; and HAMEL, *Histoire de Robespierre*, II, 229.

² See an amusing chapter in *Le Tableau de Paris*, by MERCIER, edition of 1783, VI, 233.

³ National Archives, F⁷ 4774.

⁴ Mémoires by SÉNAR, 180, and VILATE, *Les Mystères de la Mère de Dieu dévoilés*.

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¹ Fiévée's *Mémoires*. Lescure's Edition, 160.

² *Détail du procès instruit par la haute Cour de justice, séante à Vendôme, contre Drouet, Babœuf et autres, recueillis par les sténographes*, Vol. III, 202 et seq. Examination of Pillé.

³ Archives of the Mairie of Barenton, Manche: "Catherine, daughter of Gilles Théot and Michelle Heuzé was baptised by me the undersigned, priest, and named by Christophe Lammondays and Renée Théot, 5th May, 1716; and her godfather and godmother say they cannot sign their names.—A. BOUILLON, Priest."

⁴ Catherine Théot had seven brothers and sisters.—Archives of M^e Paul Simon, notary, of Paris.

⁵ "I practised virtue in my youth, I gave myself to God even in childhood."—*Papiers saisis chez Chaumette*. National Archives, T 604-5.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4775²⁷.

² Papers found in Chaumette's rooms.—National Archives, T 604-5

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¹ *Vie privée de Catherine Théot*, a pamphlet of eight pages. Paris, at Citoyenne Toubon's, bookseller in the Palais Égalité, near the glazed passage.

² Statement of the Abbé Théot, Catherine's nephew, F⁷ 4775²⁷.

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¹ FR. FUNCK-BRENTANO, *La lettre de cachet à Paris, Étude suivie d'une liste des prisonniers de la Bastille, 1659-1789.* See Nos. 5093 to 5097.

² Archives of the Salpêtrière: "Entered on the 29th May, 1779, Catherine Thor (*sic*), aged 63, of Brantou (*sic*), diocese of Avranches. By order of the King. Left, 27th June, 1782."

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¹ National Archives, F^y 4774²⁴. Report of Citoyen Jaton and Citoyen Pidoux, *gendarme*. Héron's agent Jaton had formerly served in the Swiss Regiment of Chateauvieux.

² F^y 4774²⁷. Meeting in the Faubourg Marcel, Rue Contrescarpe, a the corner of the Rue Neuve-Geneviève, near the Estrapade.

³ ". . . the commissioners of the Committee were only able to enter one after the other, and in the character of new members."—*Rapport et projets de décrets présentés à la Convention nationale au nom des Comités de Sécurité Générale et de Salut Public*, by VADIER. Sitting of the 27th Prairial, year II. Printed by order of the Convention, p. 19.

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¹ Héron's Report, Nat. Arch. F^y 4775²⁷. There are two versions of this ceremony: the original report signed by Héron, Sénar and Martin (one of their agents), and the account given by Sénar in his *Mémoirs*, p. 170 *et seq.* These two versions differ in certain details. In the report obviously drawn up by Héron, since it is in the writing of his secretary Pillé, Héron does not once refer to himself as being present. A more singular fact is that Sénar, although writing in prison, after Thermidor, when Héron himself was a prisoner, does not in his story mention the name of his savage companion, whom he calls "the informer," or "my guide." The report is indisputably authentic, but Sénar's story seems more *true*; one feels it is written by a man who was greatly struck by the scene. Nevertheless, it contains here and there certain statements which are contradicted by the inventory of Catherine Théot's furniture and effects, drawn up on the 6th Pluviôse, year IV, and preserved in the archives of M^e Paul Simon, notary in Paris.

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¹ It is true that there were three arm-chairs in Catherine Théot's rooms; but one was "a *bergère* covered with tapestry," another was a "cane chair," and the third was "blue-and-white" like most of the furnishings of the place; and a very small place it was, comprising, in addition to the kitchen, the entrance, and a loft, only the room with the alcove where the rites were performed, and a very small room that looked out, like the other, on the street. As for the "three little steps" of which Sénar speaks, the inventory only mentions "a platform covered with crimson Utrecht velvet," on which, probably, the arm-chair of the *Mère de Dieu* was raised.—Archives of M^e Paul Simon.

* Sénar's *Mémoires*, 171.

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¹ Catherine Théot possessed a great quantity of very fine linen.—National Archives F^y 4775²⁷. Letter from the Bureau of National Property to the Committee of General Security.

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² The inventory mentions a thread-pattern spoon and fork of silver with no mark, and a silver goblet with a cover, valued at 5,000 *livres*.

³ There is nothing of the kind in the inventory of the furniture. In the matter of seats nothing is mentioned but the *bergère*, two arm-chairs, six ordinary chairs, and a stool seated with straw.

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¹ "She touched my lips with a disgusting tongue."—Sénar's *Mémoires*.

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¹ Pécheloche—or Pescheloche—was Lafayette's aide-de-camp in 1790, and died at Austerlitz as colonel of the 15th Dragoons.—Archives of the Ministry of War.

² Nicolas Raffet "de Saint-Aguibois"—a title bestowed by King Stanislas—after making a fortune in San Domingo, was ruined by the revolt of the negroes, and returned to Paris, where he had been born in 1757. In 1789 he commanded a battalion of the National Guard. After the 31st May, 1793, he was appointed general in command of the Parisian army, and two months later was supplanted by Hanriot. Under the name of Nicolas he enlisted in a battalion of *chasseurs*, did not return to Paris till after Thermidor, and died in 1803. He had a brother and two sisters, of whom one was called Christine and the other Rose. During the Terror these two young women lived together in the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, No. 13. They both constantly visited Catherine Théot—"as often as they could"—said Rose in her examination. They both called themselves the *Doves of La Mère de Dieu*. In 1794 Christine was thirty-four years old. I do not know Rose's age: she seems to have been younger. They were the aunts of the great painter and draughtsman Raffet, who was the son of their brother Claude-Marie, a chemist's assistant in 1793, afterwards employed in the post office, and assassinated in the Bois de Boulogne. See, on the subject of the Raffet family, *La révolution française*, July-Dec., 1893, p. 527 *et seq.*, and the National Archives, F⁷ 4633, 4617 and 4774⁸⁶.

³ F⁷ 4775⁸⁷. Examination of Rose Raffet.

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² Charlotte Robespierre's *Mémoires. Notes et pièces justificatives*. 131 *et seq.*

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¹ *Mémoires sur Carnot*, by his son. I, 88–9.

² *Le Contrat Social*. On civil religion.

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¹ LODIEU, *Maximilien Robespierre*. Arras, 1850, p. 8.

² AULARD, *Société des Jacobins*, VI, 317. Speech by Dubois-Crancé.

³ Letter to Buissard, quoted above.

⁴ S. LACROIX, *Commune de Paris*, 2nd series, VI, 676.

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¹ See, on Robespierre, "the advocate of the Catholics," some magnificent pages by M. PIERRE DE LA GORCE, in *L'Histoire religieuse de la Révolution française*, III, 333 et seq.

² *Moniteur*, reprint, XVIII, 691.

³ Letter from Rousseau to the Corsican Butta-Foco. LEMAÎTRE, Rousseau, 269.

⁴ Deramecourt, Le clergé du diocèse d'Arras pendant la Révolution, III, 143, and *Annales révolutionnaires*, 1912, p. 325. Articles by M. E. Lesueur, Robespierre et Ch. Michaud, curé de Boury.

⁵ HAMEL, *Histoire de Robespierre*, I, 514.

⁶ Mémoires of BARBAROUX, Dauban's edition, 358. "A friend of his, an Abbé, covered with rags, whom I have since seen as a judge in the revolutionary tribunal, came to beg me to go to the *mairie*. . . ." etc., etc.

⁷ Canon PISANI, *L'Église de Paris et la Révolution*, II, 19, 20.

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¹ *Journal des Débats et de la correspondance de la Société des Amis de la Constitution*, 28th March, 1792. See *Le Mouvement religieux à Paris pendant la Révolution*, by Dr. ROBINET, II, 158 et seq.

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¹ *Moniteur*, reprint, XVIII, 507 et seq. Society of the Friends of liberty and equality, sitting at the Jacobin Club in Paris. 1st Frimaire, year II, 21st Nov., 1793.

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¹ STÉPHANE POL, *Autour de Robespierre : le Conventionnel Le Bas*, 150.

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¹ On the building of this amphitheatre see the enormous bill sent in by La Frêche, contractor for timber-work in the Rue Richer.—National Archives, F⁴ 2091; and the bill of Lathuile, the building contractor.—National Archives, F⁴ 2090.

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¹ On the making of the statues of Wisdom and Atheism see Ruggieri's bill in the National Archives, F⁴ 2090, and those of the locksmith Courbin and others, F⁴ 1017 and 2091.

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¹ The memoranda on the mountain in the Champ de Mars are chiefly to be found in the cartons numbered F⁴ 1017 and 2090 in the National Archives. One of them contains some rough sketches of the column, the sarcophagus, etc.

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¹ The house that was formerly Duplay's is now No. 398 of the Rue Saint-Honoré.

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² This door, now walled up, can be seen from a court in the Rue Richepanse.

³ A rustic staircase—a solid trap-ladder—now kept in the museum of the Conciergerie, is said to be the stairs made by Duplay to lead from the dining-room to Robespierre's room. For the plans and arrangement of the Maison Duplay see Victorien Sardou's *La Maison de Robespierre*.

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¹ National Archives, F^r 4775⁴⁷, dossier Villers.

² National Archives, W 501.

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¹ National Archives, W 500.

² *Histoire des Prisons de Paris et des départements*, year V, Vol. III, 103, 104.

³ Picqué's unpublished Memoirs, *Annales du midi*, 1899.

⁴ National Archives, F^r 4774⁵⁷.

⁵ *Répertoire Tuetey*, XI, No. 1700, and National Archives A B XIX, 179. See also STÉPHANE POL, *Le Conventionnel Le Bas*; letter of Le Bas dated 6th Frimaire, II.

⁶ GUFFROY, *Les Secrets de Joseph Lebon*, 416. Although Guffroy is untrustworthy for many reasons, we may believe, in spite of his obvious hostility, the few details he records of Robespierre's private life at the Maison Duplay, details he heard from Charlotte Robespierre, who, if she was no less acrimonious, was well-informed. Antoine-Jean Calandini—or Calendiny—formerly a private in the Corsican Regiment, was 31 years old in 1787, the date of his marriage at Arras, where he was a shoemaker. He seems to have left Arras in 1791, for after that date his name appears in none of the public records. No doubt he followed Robespierre to Paris after the latter's visit to Artois in the autumn of 1791. Information kindly supplied by M. Lennel, *docteur ès-lettres*, assistant-librarian to the Municipal Library at Arras.—In 1787 Calandini had obtained his full discharge and left the army. He was re-admitted as a lieutenant on the 27th Dec., 1792, on Robespierre's recommendation. His papers record that he was "aide-de-camp at the insurrection of the sovereign people of Paris on the 31st May, 1793."—*Archives of the Ministry of War*.

⁷ *Récit de Madame Le Bas*, STÉPHANE POL.

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¹ *Récit de Madame Le Bas*, 99.

² *Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, II, 7 et seq. The original is in the Musée des Archives. See also *Notes extraites d'un cahier écrit entièrement de la main de Robespierre*, Report by Courtois, document LIV. This paper has been analysed by Velschinger. See *Bibliographie Tourneux*, IV, No. 25071. There is also another 16mo. note-book, the pages of which are reproduced in facsimile. The copy I have before me lacks the title-page, the publisher's name, and the date.—(Communicated by M. Pierre Bessand-Massenet.)

³ STÉPHANE POL, *Autour de Robespierre*, 84.

⁴ National Archives, F^r 4775⁴⁶.

Note

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¹ *Biographie universelle*, Vol. 83.

² In December, 1793. National Archives, F⁷ 4775²⁴.

³ *Revue des Conférences et des arts*, 23rd Jan., 1789. "Duplay had let to the Robespierres, senior and junior, for a term of years reckoning from the 1st Oct., 1793, the little apartment at the back, furnished, and another apartment in the main building, unfurnished, at a rent of 1,000 *livres* for the two, without a lease." The author of this note is M. BEAUMONT, who, being a recorder in the Estate Office before 1871, had copied some of the documents afterwards destroyed in the burning of the Hôtel de Ville.

⁴ National Almanack, year II, 1794. Addresses of deputies to the Convention.

⁵ *Récit de Madame Le Bas*, STÉPHANE POL, *op. cit.*, 104.

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¹ *Mémoires de Barras*, I, 148 et seq.

² F⁷ 4774²⁷, dossier of Lacante. Interrogatory of the 8th Germinal, year II.

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¹ *Annales révolutionnaires*, 1912, p. 692.

² LAMARTINE, *Histoire des Girondins*. Élizabeth Le Bas, who corrected the proofs of Lamartine's work, allowed this phrase to pass, which seems to prove in a delicate manner that Robespierre paid nothing for his board.

³ *Répertoire Tuetey*, IX, 1347.

⁴ *Le Vieux Cordelier*, No. V, Matton's edition, p. 83.

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¹ National Archives, F¹⁸ 281 A. See also in the same series 278¹ and 1239.

² National Archives, F⁴ 2091.

³ National Archives, F⁴ 2090. Accounts of the Feast of the Supreme Being.

⁴ National Archives, F⁴ 281 A. List of contractors to the Convention.

⁵ National Archives, W^{1a}, 79. District of Bourg-l'Égalité. Sitting of the 20th Thermidor, year II.

⁶ National Archives, W^{1a}, 79 and 80.

⁷ National Archives, W^{1a}, 79.

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¹ *Répertoire Tuetey*, IX, 1347.

² National Archives, W^{1a}, 79.

³ Among the documentary evidence for Courtois' report on the papers found in Robespierre's rooms, there are lists emanating from the Popular Committee, signed with the names of Baudement and of Laviron, Madame Duplay's cousin.

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¹ Élizabeth Duplay's narrative, published by STÉPHANE POL, from the original manuscript preserved in the Le Bas family, *Autour de Robespierre*, 102 et seq.

² Now the Rue Cambon.

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¹ National Archives, W 389 and F⁷ 4762. Admiral's interrogatory which differs in some details from Barère's report to the Convention.—*Moniteur*, Reprint, XX, 539 et seq.

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¹ Admiral was, as a matter of fact, born at Auzolette, in the commune of Courgoul, Puy-de-Dôme.

² Till the 10th Messidor.

³ *Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 84.

⁴ Collot's speech may be read in the *Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 85.

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¹ *Vadier président du Comité de S reté générale*, by A. TOURNIER 158 n.

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¹ *Moniteur*, Reprint, XX, 580; and National Archives, W 389.

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¹ National Archives, AF II, 275 and W 389.

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¹ RIOUFFE, *Mémoires d'un détenu*, 74, quoted in Campardon's *Tribunal Révolutionnaire*, where Cécile Renault's examination is reproduced in full.

² AULARD, *La Société des Jacobins*, VI, 146

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¹ AULARD, *La Société des Jacobins*, VI, 153 et seq.

² *Moniteur*, quoted by AULARD, *idem*, 155.

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¹ National Archives, C 304, C II, 1117-18. Evening sitting of the 16th Prairial.

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¹ *Plan of the Fête of the Supreme Being, proposed by David and decreed by the National Convention*.—*Moniteur*, Reprint XX, 653.

² Personal instructions to the artists commissioned to carry out the details of the *Fête of the Supreme Being*. Printed paper. Library of the Town of Paris. Quoted by AULARD, *Le Culte de la Raison et le Culte de l'Étre Suprême*, 309 n. AULARD gives the names of the twenty-seven commissioned artists.

³ National Archives, F⁴ 2090. The bill of Lathuile, building-contractor : "took away the balcony from the high vestibule of the Pavillon Unité and carried the ironwork to the shop."

⁴ National Archives, F⁴ 2090.—Supplied by Ruggieri, pyrotechnist to the Republic, 114 yards of *toile cholette* (?) to make a casing for the statue of theism (*sic*). Composition of nitre, gunpowder, and sulphur *pour induire* (*sic*) the said material, 1,203 lbs.

(The words in italics are queried by the author.—*Translator.*)

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¹ National Archives, F⁴ 2090 and 2091.

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¹ National Archives, F¹⁴ I, 84. The same portfolio contains other accounts of provincial Fêtes, at Lunéville, Orgelet, Montfort-le-Brutus (l'Amaury), Monthuçon, Neauphle-la-Montagne (Neauphle-le-Château), etc.

² CONSTANT PIERRE has thrown light on this subject in his book on *Sarrette et les Origines du Conservatoire*, p. 78 *et seq.*, and also in his important work : *Hymnes et chansons de la Révolution*, p. 308 *et seq.*

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¹ ADAM, *Souvenirs d'un musicien*, and National Archives, F⁷ 4432 (in the envelope *Pièces diverses*).

² See, on all these points and on the obscurity enveloping the musical part of the Fête, not only the works of CONSTANT PIERRE cited above, but *Musique des Fêtes et Cérémonies de la Révolution*, by the same author.

³ BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 292.

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¹ National Archives, F⁴ 2091. Bill for the building operations : "For finishing on the day of the ceremony, by half-past three in the morning, with Citizen Chaudet, the re-erection of the scaffolding for the arrangement of the combustible canvas."

² National Archives, O² 453 : "Garde-Meuble. For use at the Fête of the Supreme Being. Supplied a new carpet in the three colours, red, blue and white, made of three pieces of serge sewn close together, 18 feet long each."

³ National Archives, F⁴ 2091. Bill of Citizen Bouillé, carpenter : "On the front part of the amphitheatre, a platform for the president."

⁴ National Archives, F¹³ 2782 : "A cap in the Phrygian shape, of scarlet, blue, and white serge ; the cap six feet high and eight in circumference, the whole being adjusted on a framework of iron, which had to be covered with canvas."

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¹ The place of each sectional group was marked beforehand with poles bearing alphabetical letters.—*Détail des cérémonies et de l'ordre à observer. Moniteur*, Reprint, XX, 655.

² National Archives, C 1843 : "4th Brumaire, year III ; the Committee of Public Safety to the Committee of Inspectors of the Hall—'The potatoes which were planted in the spring at great expense

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in the national garden, have been ready for eating for some time; it is time to pick them (*sic*) if it is not too late."

* VILATE, *Causes secrètes du 9 thermidor*, 197.

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¹ Two days before, Barère had proposed that the deputies should wear a uniform costume at the ceremony, the dress worn by Conventionists when employed on missions to the army. "It is only necessary," he said, "for the Inspectors of the Hall—the name given to the treasurers of the Convention—to have time to prepare the simple costume that we shall all wear at the ceremony."—*Courrier républicain*, 19th Prairial, year II, p. 297. Probably the plan could not be fully carried out for want of time; but the papers of the Committee of Inspectors of the Hall contain this entry, under the date 23rd Vendémiaire, year III: "Bill for supplying deputies' costumes, furnished by Citizen Watrin, dealer in gold lace, on the 19th Prairial last (that is to say, the day before the Fête), amounting to 56,746 *livres*, 12 *sols*—reduced to 52,233 *livres*, 6 *sols*, 3 *deniers*."—National Archives, C 304, C II 1123-4, and C 354-1853.

² *Souvenirs of Louise Fusil*.

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¹ *Journal de Paris national*, 21st Prairial, p. 2126.

² DURAND-MAILLANE, LOUISE FUSIL, etc.

³ Bill for the building operations in the garden of the Tuilleries connected with the large figure erected on the Basin. . . . "Sending for a high ladder to enable help to be given in case of need when the combustible canvas was set on fire. . . . Taking away pieces of canvas that were not consumed. . . ."

⁴ Unpublished correspondence of the Conventionist Dizès, communicated by M. Larguier.

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¹ Constant Pierre states that it is impossible to indicate with any certainty the musical pieces performed during the Fête: but he thinks the two versions of Gossec's hymn were sung, one at the Tuilleries and the other at the Champ de Mars. There was also performed, judging from its title, the chorus called *Hymne à l'Étre Suprême chanté par les enfants le 20 prairial*, of which the words were by Deschamps and the music by Bruni; and some other verses also, by Chénier, though temporarily anonymous for reasons we have already mentioned. It was sung to the air of the *Marseillaise*. See the works of CONSTANT PIERRE already cited.

² On the making and ornamentation of the car see the bills of Montpellier, figure-carver; of Bouillé, carpenter; of Rigoulot, wheelwright; and of Thelen, decorative carver.—National Archives, F⁴ and 2090 and 2091.

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¹ E. J. DELÉCLUZE, *Louis David, son école et son temps*, 8.

² E. J. DELÉCLUZE, *Louis David, son école et son temps*, ch. 7, 8.

³ *Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, II, 19, 20. Notes by

Robespierre on several deputies. "On the day of the Feast of the Supreme Being, before all the people, Bourdon indulged in the coarsest sarcasms and most improper abuse. He maliciously called attention to the interest shown in the president by the public."

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¹ BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 5.

² *Idem*.

³ Statement of accounts originally in the Treasury: one of the Ruggieri documents preserved in the Library of the Town of Paris. For this work Prud'homme received 52 *livres*.

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¹ *Mémoires et Souvenirs du chevalier de Pougens*, continued by Mademoiselle de Saint-Léon, 175 et seq.

² Letter from Sarrette to the upholsterer Aubert: "A pennant made of very light taffetas, for making signals on the mountain in the Champs de Mars."

³ National Archives, F¹⁴, I 84. "Notes (sic). *Caractère de la Fête sans tache.*" These notes seem to be the outline of a speech celebrating the beauty of the ceremony. Can it be a rapid sketch dictated by Robespierre to Simon Duplay?

⁴ National Archives, F¹⁴, I 84. Frugal meal eaten by citizens in the Champ de la Réunion itself. "The ceremony ended at a late hour; we were dying of hunger and thirst. Talma and David had great difficulty in finding food for us; and besides, we were obliged to keep out of sight, for it might have seemed too prosaic to Robespierre, who, up there at the top of the mountain, no doubt thought that nourishment of incense ought to be enough for us."—LOUISE FUSIL's *Souvenirs*.

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¹ VILATE, *Les Mystères de la mère de Dieu dévoilés*, 314.

² BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 340.

³ VILATE, *Les mystères de la mère de Dieu dévoilés*. Passim.

⁴ Her son Philippe Le Bas was born on the 28th Prairial.

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¹ Narrative of Madame Le Bas. STÉPHANE POL, *Autour de Robespierre*, 136.

² HAMEL, 543. Robespierre's historian bases his record of these words on a confidence made by Madame Le Bas.

³ "Detailed account of the decoration of the public garden and the Convention for the 20th Prairial. . . . On the face of the pedestals, on the side towards the Court, a flaming star to light the palace through the night."

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¹ *Unpublished papers*, II, 127.

² *Idem*, 119.

³ This letter came from a widow named Jakin, at Nantes, who was twenty-two years old and had an income of 40,000 *livres*.—*Revue des documents historiques*, Dec., 1876.

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¹ Doubtless the village of that name in La Drôme. There are four other places of the same name in France, but they are all less important than the hamlet of the Drôme.

² GRÉGOIRE, *Histoire des Sectes*, I, 114. Quoted by AULARD, 340.

³ National Archives, F⁷ 3821, fourth note-book. The municipality of Charonne protested against this calumny and desired its authors to be called to account.

⁴ National Archives, F⁷ 3821, third note-book.

⁵ On this point see AULARD, 302, 303 n. Le Coz had been in prison, by order of Carrier, since Oct., 1793.

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¹ *Moniteur*, Reprint XX, 581, 582.

² *Mémoires sur Carnot*, I, 524.

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¹ *Mémoires sur Carnot*, I, 524.

² *Idem*, 526.

³ *Mémoires sur Carnot*, 539.

⁴ *Journal de Paris national*, 22 prairial, p. 2126.

⁵ Letter from Faure, deputy for Seine-Inférieure. Collection of Portiez de l'Oise, quoted by HAMEL, III, 513.

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¹ *Moniteur*, Reprint XX, 695 *et seq.*

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¹ "Amar and Moïse Bayle informed me, in the Salon of Liberty, on the 24th Prairial, in the presence of Mallarmé and the general public, who were listening to us, that the nationalidical decree of the 22nd was his work alone, and the Committees had no share in it."—*Conjuration formée dès le 5 prairial . . . contre Robespierre*, p. 3. National Archives, AD¹ 108. "Under the influence of his spite Robespierre resolved to act without the Committee, and by this unexpected action to create for himself a new means of domination. Saint-Just was away; so he made an agreement with Couthon to draw up a law which should despoil the Committee of its privilege of bringing its own members to justice. . . ."—*Mémoire sur Carnot*, I, 532.

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¹ VILATE, *Causes secrètes de la révolution du 9 thermidor*, 201.

² *Moniteur*, Reprint XX, 699-700.

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¹ *Moniteur*, Reprint XX, 714-19. Like Bourdon, Merlin made excuses: "If my mind erred," he said, "it was not so with my heart." As for Bourdon, when the sitting was over he went to bed, was within an ace of losing his wits, and was ill for a month.—LECOINTRE, *Crimes des Anciens Comités*, p. 90.

Notes

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- ¹ E. J. DELÈCLUZE, *Louis David*, 165, 166.
- ² BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 323.
- ³ BARRAS, *Mémoires*, I, 180.
- ⁴ BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 227.
- ⁵ *Idem*, 122.
- ⁶ *Idem*, 260.

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- ¹ BEAULIEU, *Essais historiques*, V, 331.
- ² BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 267.
- ³ National Archives, F⁷ 4637. Chalandon's dossier.

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- ¹ One of the two Raffet sisters referred to above.

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- ¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4775²⁷. Héron and Sénar's report of the 29th Floréal, year II, on the papers found in Gerle's rooms.

² *Mémoire pour Dom Gerle*: a paper from which Courtois, in his report on the papers in Robespierre's possession, reproduced some extracts. *Pièce justificative LVII*, p. 217 *et seq.* It was published in full by the *Revue rétrospective*, 2nd series, Vol. IV.

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- ¹ On Miroudot see *L'Église de Paris pendant la Révolution française*, by the Abbé DELARC, I, 413 *et seq.*, and FRÉDÉRIC MASSON, *Le Cardinal de Bérnis*, 428 *et seq.*

² National Archives, F⁷ 4728.

³ National Archives, F⁷ 4614.

⁴ SÉNAR, *Mémoires*, 180.

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- ¹ First report by Courtois, 160.

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- ¹ On the Ducy affair see the National Archives, F⁷ 4775²⁸, Suttières' dossier; 4685, Ducy's dossier; 4716, Gauchat's dossier; and 4774²⁹, Mollard's dossier, etc.

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- ¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4775²⁷.

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- ¹ Historians usually represent Robespierre as presiding in the Assembly on that day and being forced, on account of his position, to control his anger while listening to Vadier's fooleries, emphasised by the laughter of the whole Convention. The *Moniteur* says definitely: "Bréard was in the chair," and in the original minutes reporting the sitting the words written beforehand—"Présidence de Maximilien Robespierre"—are erased with a heavy stroke of the pen.—National Archives, C 304, books 1119, 1120.

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¹ National Archives, C 304, books 1119, 1120.

² See VILATE, 184 and 278.

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¹ Not only was Catherine Théot unable to write, but there was no mention of this letter in any of the records of the official examinations and investigations on which Vadier founded his report. But in a paper published by Héron after the 9th Thermidor, when he was in prison—*A la Convention nationale*, by Citizen Héron—there is this reference: "Being entrusted with the arrest of the *Mère de Dieu* Citizen Héron felt it his duty to take to the Committee of General Security a letter that he found under the mattresses of that woman, addressed to Robespierre, by which it seems possible that he paid court to her by another channel."

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¹ Vadier's speech is in the *Moniteur*, Reprint XX, 737 *et seq.*

² The rough draft of the decree, scribbled in Vadier's trembling hand, to be handed to one of the secretaries, is in the *dossier* of the sitting.—National Archives, C 304, *loc cit.*

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¹ Fouquier-Tinville's statement before the Convention. Sitting of the 21st Thermidor, year II.—*Moniteur*, Reprint XXI, 438.

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¹ Admiral was voluntarily so completely "effaced" during the trial, in order to enhance the importance of *Robespierre's assassins*, that Collot d'Herbois was mortified, and protested against the affront that had been put upon him: "Those who were tried with Lamiral (*sic*)," he said, "were sent to the tribunal on a report by Élie Lacoste. . . . It pleased Robespierre to associate the unfortunate Renault family with them. By eclipsing him among so many prisoners he wished to efface the interest I had inspired in my fellow-citizens by the real danger I had escaped and attract to himself all the interest of a danger that was imaginary."—*Défense de J.-M. Collot, représentant du peuple*, 6 n.

² Deposition of the registrar Wolf, at Fouquier-Tinville's trial.—*Bulletin du Tribunal révolutionnaire*, No. 23, 3.

³ Campardon thinks he recognises Héron's handwriting in the original of this order.—*Tribunal révolutionnaire*, I, 366 n.

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¹ WALLON, *Histoire du Tribunal révolutionnaire*, IV, 259.

² M. de Sombreuil.

³ Louis de Sainte-Amaranthe.

⁴ Emilie de Sainte-Amaranthe.

⁵ Nicole, servant of the woman Grandmaison.

⁶ Georges VIDAL, *Souvenirs de la Terreur*, IV, 375, quoted by WALLON, *Tribunal révolutionnaire*, IV, 260 n.

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¹ At a sitting of the Committee at the beginning of Floréal, Saint-Just "the snuffler," as Carnot called him, said to the latter in the course of a discussion: "I need only write a bill of indictment to get you guillotined in two days." "Pray do," retorted Carnot. "I'm not afraid of you; you are one of those ridiculous dictators."—*Réponse des membres des deux Comités*, 303-5.

² *Mémoires sur Carnot*, I, 536, 537.

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¹ There is a sketch of this staircase at page 5 of the Prince de Joinville's *Vieux Souvenirs*.

² He is usually called Mignard of Avignon, to distinguish him from his famous namesake Pierre Mignard.

³ *Le château des Tuileries ou récit de ce qui s'est passé dans l'intérieur de ce palais depuis sa construction jusqu'au 18 brumaire de l'an VIII*, par P.J.A.R.D.E. (Roussel d'Epinal), Vol. II, 101.

⁴ *Voyage pittoresque de Paris*, par D. (d'Argenville), 1752.

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¹ These two rooms together formed the bedroom of Napoleon III.

² Napoleon III's bathroom in 1856. Henri Clouzot, *Des Tuileries à Saint-Cloud*, 1925.

³ National Archives, II, 180, 191, 225.

⁴ National Archives, AF II, 180, 191²²⁴. The document has been published by AULARD—*Comité de Salut public*, July, 1793

⁵ "1st August. Lodging granted to Citizen Dracon Julien, secretary to the Committee, at the top of the Pavillon de l'Égalité" (de Flore).

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¹ National Archives, O² 453.

² National Archives, O² 453. List of furniture and effects thought to be necessary for the Committees of Public Safety and of General Security.

³ National Archives, O² 453.

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¹ National Archives, O² 449.

² National Archives, O² 543, envelope No. 2.

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¹ *Mémoires sur Carnot*, I, 539.

² National Archives, O² 453. "For the use of the Committee of Public Safety, 22 Ventôse, year II."

³ *Études révolutionnaires, Saint-Just et la Terreur*, by EDOUARD FLEURY, I, 213.

⁴ National Archives, O² 453. National Garde Meuble, 3 nivôse, year II.

⁵ *Idem.*

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¹ Letter from the Conventionists Paganel and Feraud to the Inspectors of the Hall, 354, 1845.

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² In the court of the Riding-School, Nos. 616, 617 and 621.—National Archives, O² 469.

³ National Archives, AF II 33-170, 24 Pluviôse, year II.

⁴ Four in Pluviôse and three in Prairial. Same *dossier*.

⁵ *Idem*. 8 Germinal, year II.

⁶ AULARD, *Réaction thermidorienne*, I, 24.

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¹ The original letter is in the museum of the National Archives.

² Unpublished papers found in Robespierre's rooms, II, 359 *et seq.*

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¹ Lindet's papers. See *Robert Lindet*, by MONTIER, 247 n.

² BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 183-5; the third floor, according to Barère, *Mémoires*, II, 208.

³ BÈGIS, *Curiosités révolutionnaires, Saint-Just et les bureaux de la police générale*, 12.

⁴ *Troisième réponse des membres des anciens Comités*, 40.

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¹ *Mémoires sur Carnot*, I, 534, and BAUDOT's *Notes historiques*, 25.

² *Mémoires sur Carnot*, I, 539.

³ LECOINTRE, *Les Crimes des anciens Comités*.

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¹ BAUDOT, *Notes Historiques*, 12.

² BARRAS, *Mémoires*, I, 170 *et seq.*

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¹ By the law of the 22nd Prairial, indeed, the tribunal was endowed with four courts. But the measure was not carried out, either because there were not enough judges or jurymen or because Dumas and Fouquier could not find room in the Palais de Justice for the two additional courts.

² *Mémoires sur Carnot*, I, 543 n.

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¹ *Saint-Just et la Terreur*, by EDOUARD FLEURY, I, 228.

² COURTOIS, *Rapport sur les papiers trouvés chez Robespierre*, 159, 160, 165, 167.

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¹ AULARD, *La Société des Jacobins*, VI, 298 and 469.

² AULARD, *La Société des Jacobins*, VI, 193. Sitting of the 9th Messidor.

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¹ AULARD, *La Société des Jacobins*, VI, 193.

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¹ At the time of the alleged plot in the Luxembourg, Fouquier was expected to try 156 prisoners at once, but at his request they were divided into three batches—60 on the 19th Messidor, 50 on the 21st 46 on the 22nd. See the *Moniteur* of the 23rd Thermidor, Reprint XXI, 138.

² HAMEL, *Robespierre*, II, 606.

³ GARAT'S *Mémoires*, 302, 303.

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¹ *Mémoires sur Carnot*, I, 530.

² *Mémoires sur Carnot*, 535.

³ *Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, III, and CONSTANT PIERRE, *Hymne est chansons de la Révolution*.

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¹ AULARD, *Société des Jacobins*, VI, 193. Sitting of the 9th Messidor.

² *Idem*, p. 212.

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¹ In a touchingly eloquent letter that was never finished nor sent. The text of it has been published by MATHON, *Le Vieux Cordelier*, p. 165

² BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 41.

³ RIOUTTE, *Mémoires d'un détenu*, Second Edition, VI.

⁴ *Courrier Républicain*, No. 274, 15 Thermidor, year II, pp. 255, 256.

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¹ *Papiers inédits*, III, 90.

² National Archives, AF¹¹ 33²⁷⁴. "Germinal, year II: received 18,000 copies of Saint-Just's report on the foreign plot, printed by Nicolas, Rue Honoré, No. 755.

³ *Répertoire Tuetey*, IX, 1997.

⁴ *Papiers inédits*, II, 389.

⁵ He was included in the batch of "Robespierre's assassins."—National Archives, F⁷ 4774⁸⁰.

⁶ National Archives, F⁷ 4274⁸⁰. Louis Pottier's dossier.

⁷ (I.e., he had taken part in the September Massacres.—Translator.)

⁸ National Archives, W^{1a} 439, dossier 34.

⁹ National Archives, F⁷ 4674. See the Archives of the Seine on the subject of the relations of Lazowski, Duplay and Deschamps with Nicolas.—*Bureau du domaine national*, 1456, *liaisse* 3441.

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¹ Maximilien-François Deschamps, born 2nd Feb., 1792, died in Paris, 19th Feb., 1859.—Archives of the Seine, *État civil*.

² *Dénonciation que fait l'assemblée populaire et républicaine de Maisons-Alfort au Comité de Sureté générale*, Second Report by Courtois; *Pièce Justificative*, I. The Maison Lechanteur is now the Mairie of Maisons-Alfort.

³ AULARD, *Société des Jacobins*, VI, 303. "Arrests made by Deschamps at Orléans," and F⁷ 4436, *plaquette* 8, folio 327, "arrests at Rouen."

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¹ National Archives, W^{1a} 79. Paper relating to the men Deschamps and Filon.

² National Archives, F⁷ 4436, *plaquette* 8, folio 340.—“² Messidor : The Treasury will pay Citizen Deschamps, aide-de-camp of the armed force of Paris, the sum of 1,200 *livres*, which is to be taken from the fund of 50 millions placed by decree at the disposal of the Committee of Public Safety, Billaud-Varenne, Robespierre, Couthon.”

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 3822.

² National Archives, W 500, document 155. A facsimile of this letter was published by M. A. DUNOYER, in his book *Deux jurés du Tribunal révolutionnaire*. (In the original the words here quoted are : l'un de ceux qui on juge la bête féroche qui a devoré une grande partie de la république, celle que l'on califiait de ci deven reine.—Translator's note.)

³ Archives of the Seine, *Domaines. Répertoire Lazare*, I.

⁴ Papers of Ligier de Verdigny, president of the Tribunal at Fouquier-Tinville's trial. Communicated privately.

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¹ *Idem*.

² *Idem*.

³ Unpublished papers found in Robespierre's rooms, II, 389.

⁴ National Archives, F⁷ 4775⁴⁷. *Dossiers* of Guislin-François Villers.

⁵ BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 183.

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¹ National Archives, W 500, 1st *dossier*, 122, quoted by Campardon—*Tribunal révolutionnaire*, I, 342.

² Statement by Foucault, judge of the Revolutionary Tribunal, National Archives, W^{1a} 80, evidence which is confirmed by the *Pièces Justificatives LIX a* and *b*, of Courtois' first report.

³ National Archives, F⁷ 4436, *plaquette* 3, papers 85 and 87.

⁴ Or Masson ; no doubt the man called Macon on Robespierre's list, and the *Musson* of the Reprint of the *Moniteur*, XX, 696.

⁵ National Archives, W 501.

⁶ CAMPARDON. *Tribunal révolutionnaire*, I, 343 n.

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¹ *Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, II, 203, 208, 209, 211. 230, 233.

² *Idem*, II, 209.

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¹ *Idem*, 212.

² *Papiers inédits*, etc., II, 213.

³ *Idem*, III, 65, 66.

⁴ National Archives, F⁷ 4436, *plaquette* 3, No. 85.

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- ¹ *Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, I, 185.
- ² National Archives, F⁷ 4436, plaque 3, documents 86 and 87.
- ³ *Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, I, 195.
- ⁴ Courtois' Report, *Pièce justificative*, LIV, p. 212.

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- ¹ Tallien.
- ² The chapel of the Tuilleries had become the anteroom, at the upper end of the first landing of the grand staircase of the palace.
- ³ *Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, I, 374, 375.
- ⁴ D'HÉRICAULT, *La Révolution de Thermidor*, 280, and BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 323.
- ⁵ *Souvenirs* by BERRYER, I, 227, quoted by d'Héricault.

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- ¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4775⁴⁰.
- ² National Archives, 4775⁴⁵ and AF¹¹ 47-363.
- ³ E. HAMEL, *Les deux conspirations du général Malet*, 25.
- ⁴ *Mémoires* of Dufort de Cheverny, published by Robert de Crèvecoeur.
- ⁵ LOTTIN, *Histoire de Beaugency*, I, 206.
- ⁶ STÉPHANE POL, *Le Conventionnel Le Bas*, 207 and 209.
- ⁷ Robespierre's note-book, already quoted.

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- ¹ National Archives, W^{1a} 79. Interrogatory of Jacques-Maurice Duplay, 12th Nivôse, year III; on the other hand invitations were given to Barère, whose death was already planned: "Barère came to dinner ten, twelve, or fifteen days before the 9th Thermidor."
- ² *Supplément aux crimes des anciens Comités*, by DULAURE, 122, 123. Couthon's association with Robespierre is difficult to understand. When Couthon first became a member of the Convention he was very moderate. Dulaure relates that during the sitting of the 21st Sept., 1792, in the great salon at the Tuilleries, Couthon, seated in the embrasure of a window, was suddenly surrounded by some of the Parisian deputies. Marat clapped him on the shoulder, saying: "He's a good patriot, is Couthon!" Couthon, who could not move on account of his paralysis, pulled at Dulaure's coat and whispered: "Do me a service; take me away from this set of brigands." Dulaure took him in his arms and carried him away.—Same work, p. 121.

³ Charlotte Robespierre's *Mémoires*, 139 *et seq.*

⁴ Letter from Buissart, dated Arras, 10th Messidor, year II.—*Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, I, 247.

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- ¹ *Papiers inédits*, I, 254, 26th Floréal, year II.
- ² BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 144.
- ³ National Archives, W^{1a} 79. Interrogatory of Duplay *père*.
- ⁴ *Papiers inédits*, etc., I, 315.

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¹ *Papiers inédits*, etc., III, 90. "Citoyenne Duplay told us at her own table that Nicolas was at the head of that plot."

² National Archives, W^{1a} 79. Documents relating to the affair of Citizen Duplay and others.

³ Letter of the 21st November, 1762.

⁴ BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 242.

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¹ "My eldest sister was promised to Robespierre."—STÉPHANE POL, *op. cit.*, 150.

² BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 242.

³ STÉPHANE POL, *op. cit.* Narrative of Madame Le Bas, 107.

⁴ Ninth Walk.

⁵ National Archives, W 79.—Ramoger, national agent at Choisy-le-Roi, came to Paris with Vaugeois, who left him in a café, and when he returned to him after a long absence said, "he had dined with Robespierre and had gone out with him in his carriage."

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4432.

² National Archives, W 500.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4432 and 4774⁵⁷. According to a very strong tradition at Montmorency, so firmly rooted that in default of very clear documentary evidence it is difficult to reject it, Robespierre stayed in the Hermitage of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the summer of the year II. This little house was confiscated from the émigré Belzunce, Madame d'Épinal's son-in-law, and had become the property of the nation. It was rented for a time by Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely, ex-deputy in the Constituent Assembly, who, when he was proscribed and obliged to hide, left the Hermitage vacant. It was then that Robespierre occupied it, according to the story, being attracted to it by his admiration for the author of the *Contrat Social*, and also by the fact that Citizens Leturc and Carré were in turn mayors at Montmorency during the Revolution. Their assertions on this point were identical and unvarying, were transmitted to their families, accepted by eminent learned men of the district, and became articles of faith. (See *Revue Illustrée des Communes de France*, Montmorency, 1909.) The tradition, therefore, dates from the Revolution. It even definitely states that Maximilien spent the night between the 5th and 6th Thermidor at the Hermitage—a night of meditation on the eve of the day that was to decide his fate. In the course of it, no doubt, his mystic soul held converse with the churlish philosopher whom he chose for his master and model. Grétry became the owner of the Hermitage in 1798. His nephew Flamand Grétry, who wrote a remarkable and terse account of his relations with the composer—*La Vallée de Montmorency*—and himself inherited Rousseau's little house, mentions Robespierre's supposed visit in that work.

² On this question of secret meetings held by the Committee of Public Safety at Charenton, see the *Moniteur*, Reprint, XXII, 139 and 304.

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³ Manuscripts of G. B. Fortescue, Esq., preserved at Dropmore. Correspondence of the English spy with Lord Granville.

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¹ Archives of the office of Maitre Bochet, notary at Choisy-le-Roi.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4775⁴¹. Extract from the minutes of the bench of magistrates of the commune and canton of Chantilly.

² National Archives, W^{1a} 79.

³ Comte de FELS, *Ange, Jacques Gabriel, premier architecte du roi*, p. 185 *et seq.* and Plate XII.

⁴ National Archives, W^{1a} 79.

⁵ National Archives, W 500. Depositions of Jacques Nourry, of Choisy-sur-Seine, and Alexandre Huet-Sourdon, painter, living at Choisy.

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¹ National Archives, W 500. Defence of Beausire.

² National Archives, W^{1a} 79, and F⁷ 4775⁴¹.

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¹ National Archives, T 1494². Register of the Revolutionary Committee of Choisy.

² National Archives, W 79.

³ Political personages also came whom one is surprised to find there. On the 15th March, 1794, the English spy wrote to Lord Granville : "On the evening of the 9th Robespierre, Sieyès and their partisans met at Choisy. On the morning of the 10th Hébert, Pache, and Chaumette came to see them and persuaded them to have 2,200,000 *livres* paid to the Commune . . . 100,000 *écus* lent to Hébert, etc. . . ." A few days later the English agent wrote : "There was another meeting at Choisy on the 12th March ; Robespierre, Sieyès, Couthon, Barère, Saint-Just, Billaud-Varenne and Pache were present. When they broke up the meeting on the 13th at three o'clock in the morning they at once assembled the Committee of Public Safety. . . ."—*Manuscript of G. B. Fortescue, Esq., preserved at Dropmore*. Hébert was arrested on the 13th March and Chaumette on the 17th.

⁴ Courtois's second Report. *Pièce justificative*, No. 1.

⁵ National Archives, F⁷ 4775⁴¹.

⁶ *Idem*, Blache's inquiry.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4775⁴¹. "Didiée was not guiltless of drunkenness."

² National Archives, W 500. Deposition of Jacques Nourry.

³ LACRETELLE, *Précis historique de la Révolution française*, quoted by DAUBAN, *Paris en 1794*, 440.

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¹ Fragment of Bosc's *Mémoires* preserved in the archives of the Museum.—PERROUD, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, II, 527.

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² Duplay, for instance, admitted that he had visited Vaugeois with Robespierre, but only twice. "The meal," he said, "was most sober."

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¹ The Guemin family, the head of which was manager of the coaching establishment at Choisy, where he had been mayor before Vaugeois.

² National Archives, W^{1a} 79. Blache's mission to Choisy; denunciation of the Vaugeois family.

³ For the facts relating to Choisy see W^{1a} 79, 80 and 500, and F⁷ 4775⁴¹.

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¹ Plan of the fete fixed for the 10th Thermidor.—*Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 279 *et seq.*

² "The Convention was to be butchered on a certain day . . . and Robespierre would have been proclaimed dictator or triumvir or law-giver, as was prophesied by the Prophet Ezekiel according to the Mère de Dieu. . . ."—National Archives, F⁷ 4583, Book 4, p. 28.

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¹ AULARD, *Société des Jacobins*, V.

² *Papiers inédits*, III, 291, 292, and Barère's *Mémoires*, II, 209.

³ *Idem*.

⁴ National Archives, F⁷ 4433, quoted by d'Héricault, 281.

⁵ National Archives, F⁷ 4432.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4432.

² *Denunciation by the popular and republican assembly of Maisons-Alfort*. Second report by Courtois.—*Pièces justificatives*, No. 1.

³ *Papiers inédits*, etc., II, 226.

⁴ National Archives, F⁷ 4775⁴⁷.

⁵ STÉPHANE POL, *Autour de Robespierre*. Narrative of Élizabeth Duplay, 136.

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¹ *Moniteur*, Reprint, XV, 74, and XIX, 13. "A deputation appeared at the bar with heads covered. Couthon protested against this unseemly behaviour, and Robespierre said that the bad example had been set by the deputies themselves. He asked that the members of the Assembly should be forbidden to speak with their hats on."—Sitting of 30th Dec., 1793.

² It measured 45 metres by 15.

³ Twenty metres.

⁴ National Archives, F¹⁸ 2782, Accounts of Citizen Le Doyen upholsterer.

⁵ National Archives, F¹⁸ 2782, Accounts of Citizen Roger, sculptor.

⁶ National Archives, F¹⁸ 281a. "Eight large bronze figures, 8 feet high, painted by Citizen Strabaux."

⁷ National Archives, F¹⁸ 2782.

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¹ Robespierre's speech in the Convention on the 8th Thermidor was not reproduced in the *Moniteur*; it was published in pamphlet form a month later from the rough draft found in Robespierre's rooms, which was covered with erasures and interpolations, a fact that accounts for the repetitions in the published speech.

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¹ *Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 329.

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¹ *Le républicain français*, No. 614, p. 352¹.

² BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 123.

³ *Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 331.

⁴ Information given to E. Hamel by Dr. Duplay, Simon's son.

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¹ ESQUIROS, *Histoires des Montagnards*.

² TOULOUGEON, *Histoire de France depuis la Révolution*, IV, 256, quoted by AULARD, *Société des Jacobins*, VI, 287.

³ BUCHEZ et ROUX, *Histoire parlementaire*, XXXIV, 2.

⁴ BUCHEZ et ROUX, *Histoire parlementaire*.

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¹ LECOINTRE, *Conspiration formée . . . 5*.—National Archives, AD¹ 108.

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¹ For the night in the committeee-room the account followed here is that of Prieur, an eye-witness, reproduced in *Mémoires sur Carnot*, I, 545 *et seq.*

² *Journal de Perlet*, 20 Thermidor.

³ National Archives, W 501, Didiée's deposition.

⁴ BUCHEZ et ROUX, *Histoire parlementaire*, XXXIV, 3.

⁵ BARÈRE, *Mémoires*, II, 220.

⁶ *Idem*, 222.

⁷ *Le Républicain français*, 10 Thermidor, No. 614.

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¹ E. FLEURY, *Saint-Just et la Terreur*, II, 370.

² National Archives, W^{1b} 535¹².

³ LECOINTRE, *Robespierre peint par lui-même*, quoted by Wallon, *Tribunal révolutionnaire*, V, 220 n.

⁴ *Le Républicain français*, No. 614.

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¹ *Le Républicain français*, p. 2523.

² That of André Dumont.

³ The actual word is not in the *Moniteur*, which only says: "Robespierre apostrophised the president and members of the Assembly in most insulting terms." The *Républicain français* of the 10th (p. 2523)

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gives Robespierre's words thus: "President, how is it that you are leading the assassins to-day?" Neither paper reports the famous words: "It is the blood of Danton that chokes you!" nor Robespierre's appeal to the Right: "It is to you, true men, that I appeal." It is very likely that the words were never uttered, at all events in this exact form; some compiler may have taken scraps of dialogue of a less characteristic kind exchanged between Robespierre and his colleagues during the uproar, and turned them into the formulas that have become legendary.

"*LOZEAU.* "No one thought of indicting Robespierre junior; he wished to share his brother's fate. There was no one to protest against this crime. Will it be believed that the arrest of Robespierre junior and Le Bas created ferocious delight?"—BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 81.

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¹ Second Report by Courtois, p. 46, n.

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¹ Second Report by Courtois, p. 145.

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¹ Deposition of Courvol, usher to the National Convention, 2nd Report by Courtois, p. 199.—*Pièce justificative*, XXXV.²

² "At about half-past three in the afternoon I presented myself at the secretaries' office at the headquarters of the Commune. . . ."—Report to the Committee of General Security by Citizen Héron, charged with the arrest of Hanriot. B.N. L_b⁴¹ 1182.

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¹ "You will remain with us; I will put you under the protection of the armed force here."—Héron's Report.

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¹ The Hôtel de Brionne, as this building was formerly called, was almost touching the Pavillon de Marsan, and encroached on one of the courts of the Tuileries near the spot where the Museum of Decorative Arts now stands. The Hôtel de Brionne can be clearly seen in Mécou's famous print, after Carle Vernet and Isabey: *La Revue du Quintidi*.

² "They took from us . . . a set of letters that they found among my poor husband's papers relating to the robbery and plunder that was carried on in Belgium by those wretched men Danton, Bourdon de l'Oise, Léonard Bourdon and others. Nothing was ever heard of them; they completely disappeared. . . ."—Narrative of Madame Le Bas.

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¹ On the lack of discipline among the men from the *Invalides* entrusted with the defence of the Convention see the National Archives, C 354, 1848. The document is dated Fructidor.

² Now the Lying-in Hospital.

³ Deposition of the gendarme Chanlaire. Second Report by COURTOIS, 113.

¹ Deposition of Guiard, porter at the prison of the Luxembourg,
W^{1a} 79.

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¹ Narrative of Madame Le Bas, STÉPHANE POL, *op. cit.*, 138.

² According to her narrative, compared with the official documents, it must have been about half-past nine in the evening, or at latest ten o'clock, when this parting took place; and it must have been nearly midnight when Madame Le Bas set out for her own house, since, as she walked back by the Quays, she met the Conventionists on horseback parading the streets to announce that the insurgents had been outlawed.

³ Deposition of Brochard, the porter at the Commune: "At ten o'clock I was ordered to put up some lamps to illuminate the square."—Second Report by COURTOIS, 201.

⁴ The bell in the belfry of the Hôtel de Ville weighed 5,500 lbs. and dated from 1609. Its tone must have been lower than that of the royal bell at the Palais de Justice. It was destroyed in 1871.—LOUIS LAMBEAU, *L'Hôtel de Ville de Paris*, 21.

⁵ Deposition of the porter Brochard.

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¹ On the rescue of Hanriot see the depositions of Vitou, of Dulac, an employé at the Committee of Public Safety, and of Laforgue.—Second Report by COURTOIS, *Pièces justificatives*, XXXI, XXXIX, and XLIII.

² Merlin de Thionville quotes a memorandum by Carnot on light artillery, dated the 9th Thermidor. Merlin's Correspondence, published by JEAN REYNAUD.

³ *Mémoires de Barras*, I, 189

⁴ *Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 339.

⁵ National Archives, F¹³ 278² and C 354, No. 1853. The lighting of the Convention and the Committees, which was in the hands of Citizen Lange, "purveyor of lights, Rue Avoye," cost about 15,000 *livres* a quarter during the winter. The Committee of Public Safety alone spent 480 *livres* a quarter on wicks.

⁶ Fievée's Memoirs.

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¹ National Archives, W^{1a} 80. Report of Carlier, second-lieutenant in command of the second gun of the Section Mucius Scevola.

² National Archives, W^{1a} 80.

³ Deposition of Guiard, porter of the Luxembourg.—National Archives, W^{1a} 79.

⁴ National Archives, W^{1a} 80. "Commune of Paris, Department of Police (minute)—9th Thermidor, to the concierge of the House of Detention of — (sic). We enjoin upon you, citizen, in the name of your responsibility, to be extremely careful to prevent any letter or other paper from entering or leaving the house you are deputed to guard. . . . You are also forbidden to receive any prisoner or to set anyone free except by order of the Administration of Police. The Administrators of the Police of the Department. Signed . . ."

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¹ Deposition of Louise Picard, aged 14 and a half, living in the house

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of Citoyenne Fleurot, where she was paid for her services.—Second Report by COURTOIS, *Pièce justificative*, XXXII, p. 193.

¹ *La mort de Robespierre, a tragedy in three Acts, in verse, with notes containing unknown facts*, by *** (Serieys).

² National Archives, F⁷ 4436, quoted by WALLON, *Tribunal révolutionnaire*, V, 235, 236.

³ Extract from the Minutes of the Commune: "The Citizen Mayor requests that a deputation may be commissioned to go and fetch Robespierre senior and to point out to him that he does not belong to himself, but should entirely belong to his country and the people."—Second Report by COURTOIS, 196.

⁴ E. FLEURY, *Saint-Just et la Terreur*, II, 361.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4432.

² Deposition of Petit, concierge at the prison of Port-Libre.—Second Report by COURTOIS, Document XXXV, p. 198.

³ D'HÉRICAULT, *La Révolution de Thermidor*, 461. Juneau claimed the value of his coat—120 *livres*—and of his hat—20 *livres*.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4432. Depositions of Robert and Melin on a distribution of wine at the Mairie, at about 10 o'clock in the evening. They received a bottle for the night.

² National Archives, W^{1a} 80. Deposition of Citizen Dinanceau, lieutenant of the company of Mucius Scœvola.

³ The defection of the sectional troops is usually attributed to a storm. Most of the accounts of the night of the 9th Thermidor speak of rain—even "torrential rain"—falling at about midnight. It had rained a little at a quarter-past nine on the morning of the 9th, but not a drop fell for the rest of the day nor in the night. This is the report of the Observatory for these two days: "9th Thermidor.—3.15, sky entirely obscured, calm; 5 o'clock, the same; 9 o'clock, a little rain at 9.15; noon, sky clear in places; 4 o'clock, cloudy; 10.15, the same. 10th Thermidor.—3.30, sky obscured, calm; 9 o'clock, drizzle; noon, weak sunshine at intervals, calm; 3 o'clock, sky obscured, calm. On the 9th the maximum temperature was, at noon, 19° 7' (Réaumur); it fell to 12° 7' towards three in the morning and rose on the 10th at 3 o'clock in the afternoon to 20° 4'."—Manuscript register of meteorological observations. Library of the Observatory, AF¹ 14, VI. A private observer who took careful notes, though without scientific accuracy, of each day's temperature, records on the 9th: "It rained a little this morning"; and on the 10th that it rained a little in the afternoon. The first storm he records is on the 12th Thermidor, after a day of overwhelming heat.—Unpublished *Journal of Célestin Guitard*, of the Académie de Vaudreuil in the Place Saint-Sulpice.

⁴ Narrative of Élizabeth Le Bas.

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¹ National Archives, AF¹ 47, 365, Document 26.

² *Mémoires* of Barras, I, 194.

³ She writes that she recognised Barère and Bourdon. It does not appear, however, that Barère was among these perambulating orators.

Notes

* Deposition of Dulac, 2nd Report by COURTOIS, 211.

⁵ Or Salle de l'Égalité. Deposition of Bochard, porter at the Hôtel de Ville. 2nd Report by COURTOIS, XXXVI, 201.

* Second Report by COURTOIS, 123.

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¹ One of whom, Citizen Chabru, was a cripple for the rest of his life. National Archives, D XXXV ^a.

² Commune of Paris. 2nd Report by COURTOIS.—*Pièce justificative*, XXXVIII, 203.

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¹ *Anecdotes relatives au 9 thermidor.* Dulac's deposition.

² ED. FLEURY, *Saint-Just et la Terreur*, II, 364, and Dulac's *Anecdotes*, quoted above.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4766. Deposition of Citizen Laroche, working painter.

² STÉPHANE POL, *Autour de Robespierre*, 317.

³ The papers and articles found on Robespierre junior are among the National Archives, F⁷ 4433. One of the letters is from Buissart.

⁴ National Archives, AF¹¹ 47, *plaquette* 363.

⁵ It is indispensable to show the reasons for which the theory of Robespierre's *suicide* is adopted here—a theory opposed to the widely-spread tradition of a pistol-shot aimed by the gendarme Méda.

In addition to the statements of Bochard, porter at the Hôtel de Ville, and Dulac, agent of the Committee of Public Safety, we have a narrative founded "on information supplied by the employés of the Secretaries' Office at the Commune," which contains these words: "Robespierre blew his brains out."—(*Journal de Perlet*, No. 487, of the 24th Thermidor, p. 87.) To this evidence must be added that of the speaker of the députation from the Section des Gravilliers, received by the Convention on the 16th Thermidor: "Robespierre senior shot himself in the mouth with a pistol, and at the same time received another shot from a gendarme."—(*Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 385.) While appreciating the praiseworthy intention of this citizen to reconcile the two versions, we can only accept the first part of his statement, for we know from the surgeons' report that Robespierre showed no trace of any wound but the one he gave himself in the mouth, and was not, therefore, shot by any gendarme.

In the face of these four narratives, three of which are contemporaneous with the event—Dulac's must have been written a few months later—can we give any credit to that of Méda, which is dated September, 1802, and contains nearly as many boasts and blunders as it has lines? To judge from his *Précis historique des événements qui se sont passés dans la soirée du 9 thermidor*, Méda was the hero of the day: it was he who arrested Hanriot, his general, at the Committee of Security: and, finding the members of the Committee of Public Safety "much perplexed," he "took part in their sitting" and gave them such good advice that he, a humble gendarme, was instantly put in command of all the forces at the disposal of the Convention. His first exploit was "to escape by passing beneath several horses," for Hanriot, on being set free, was determined he should die. Méda took

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refuge in the Convention and then walked to the Hôtel de Ville with Léonard Bourdon, who named him "commandant of the attack." He entered the town hall, and in the Secretaries' Office found Robespierre "seated in an arm-chair, his left elbow on his knees and his head supported by his left hand." Here we must allow Méda himself to speak : "I sprang at him, pointing my sword at him, and said : *Give yourself up, traitor.* He raised his head and said to me : *It is you that are a traitor, and I shall have you shot.* At these words I took one of my pistols in my left hand, and, taking a step to the right, I fired. . . . He fell from his chair ; the report of my pistol startled his brother, who threw himself out of the window. . . . The conspirators dispersed in all directions ; I remained master of the battle-field. . . ." Then Méda describes the Incorruptible "lying at the foot of the tribune" ; he searched his pockets and took his watch and pocket-book, "the contents of which were worth at least 10,000 francs." The grenadiers sprang upon the wounded man, whom they thought dead, and dragged him by the feet to the Quai Pelletier to throw him into the Seine ; but Méda intervened and had him taken direct to the Conciergerie. Now all this is plainly untrue, for the suicide of Robespierre junior did not follow but preceded that of his brother ; there was no tribune in the Salon du Sécrétariat ; and the Incorruptible was not taken to the Conciergerie, but to the Tuileries. We can only believe that Méda saw nothing and knew nothing of the events of the night between the 9th and 10th Thermidor.

It is true that he was presented to the Convention and embraced by the president. But this was not for ridding the Republic of the tyrant. The *Moniteur* simply says : "This brave gendarme killed two of the conspirators with his own hand."—(*Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 343.) Not a word about Robespierre. A year later, in the report that he crammed with quotations from official documents, Courtois wrote : "*Robespierre, whom a gendarme thought he killed, shot himself with a pistol.*"—(2nd Report by COURTOIS, p. 70 et seq.) When Courtois said this he was addressing the Conventionists, who knew all the facts, and many of whom thought poorly of him. The more they distrusted him the less likely he was to risk being contradicted.

As for deriving information from the report of the surgeons who dressed Robespierre's wound at the Tuileries, we need not think of it. Dr. Paul Reclus, when consulted by M. Aulard, said that "one must disregard, as insufficient and contradictory, the words of the official report on which historians rely in accepting the theory of assassination."

The only passage in Méda's story which perhaps merits some attention is this : "I came upon a fugitive on the staircase : it was Couthon, who was being saved. The wind having blown out my light I fired at random and missed him, but wounded in the leg the man who was carrying him." There is a rather striking correspondence between these few lines and the statement of the painter Laroche quoted above. It was certainly Couthon at whom Méda fired, and Couthon, too, whom "the grenadiers dragged by the feet to the quay to throw him into the Seine."

Méda, who was merely a gendarme at the time of the 9th Thermidor, demanded the rank of general as a reward. He was promoted to that of second-lieutenant. We must, however, pay him due homage : in 1812 he was colonel of the 1st regiment of mounted *chasseurs* and was killed at Moscow at the very moment that the Emperor for his gallant conduct promoted him to brigadier-general.

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¹ *Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 342^a.

² Second Report by COURTOIS, 72 n. There is a very old tradition that this table was the one now in the Archives Nationales, in the bedroom of the Prince de Soubise.

³ National Archives AF¹¹ 32, p. 363. Expenses incurred by the people's representatives in the night of the 9th-10th Thermidor, through Mathey, office porter of the war-section of the Committee of Public Safety: "23 bottles of wine, 13 at 40 sols and 10 at 50 sols; four 4-lb. loaves, 3 *livres*; a ham, 18 *livres*; 8 cutlets, 6 *livres*; peach, apricots, plums, 6 *livres* 15 sols."

⁴ This case bore the name and address of a gunsmith in the Rue Saint-Honoré.

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¹ Report of the medical officers on the dressing of Robespierre's wounds.—2nd Report by COURTOIS, XXXVII, 120.

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¹ It is said that this chair is now at the Comédie-Française. See the *Figaro* of the 25th Jan., 1891.

² CHARLES MAURICE, *Histoire anecdotique du théâtre et de la littérature*.

³ RIOUTTE, *Mémoires d'un détenu*, 2nd Edition, 76.

⁴ *Idem*.

⁵ " NOUGARET, *Histoire des prisons*, IV, 312.

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¹ *Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 346, and Courtois's 2nd Report, XXXI^a and XL.

² WALLON, *Tribunal révolutionnaire*, V, 252.

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¹ NOUGARET, *Histoires des Prisons*, IV, 313.

² WALLON, *Tribunal révolutionnaire*, V, 254, according to Louis Blanc.

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¹ On the execution of Robespierre and his confederates see AULARD, *Réaction Thermidorienne*, I, 1 *et seq.*

² *Moniteur*, Reprint, XXI, 354.

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¹ WALLON, *Tribunal révolutionnaire*, V, 268.

² Second Report by COURTOIS, 152.

³ National Archives, W^{1a} 439.

⁴ *Courrier Républicain* of the 6th Fructidor.

⁵ Report of the Police Commissioner of the Section des Sans-Culottes.—STÉPHANE POL, *Autour de Robespierre*, 295 *et seq.*, n.

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¹ *Histoire des prisons de Paris et des Départements*, year V, II, 129.

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* National Archives, F⁷ 4583, letter from Citoyenne Auzat, 9th Brumaire, year IV.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 6694, 1st Ventôse, year III.

² I.e., fur-lined. (*Translator.*)

³ National Archives, F⁷ 3299¹⁰. For the registers of the dépôt see W 534 and 535.

⁴ PROUSSINALLE, *Histoire du Tribunal révolutionnaire*, II, 319 n.

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¹ *Revue des Conférences et des Arts*, 23rd Jan., 1879.

² Louis Lazare. *Bibliothèque municipale*, IV, 1st part. Quoted by DAUBAN, *Paris en 1794*, 317.

³ National Archives, F⁷ 4694.

⁴ Documents of the Ministry of Public Property.

⁵ According to the inscription on his tombstone in the Cemetery of Père Lachaise.

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¹ National Archives, W^{1a} 79.

² National Archives, F⁷ 4583.

³ *Almanach national pour l'an II*, p. 272. The name is incorrectly printed: Calaudini.

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¹ National Archives, W^{1a} 79.—“Instructions to commissioners to the armies, with regard to the citizens. . . Calandiny (*sic*) and others, confined in Paris.” Calandini was taken to Lille and remained there till the 30th Thermidor; he appeared before the Committee of General Security on the 7th Fructidor, was interrogated, and was set free on the 10th. On the 11th he left Paris to return to his post and heard during the journey that a fresh warrant was issued against him. He gave himself up at Arras, whence he was taken back to the Conciergerie with several other officers of high rank. “The Public Prosecutor declared himself incapable of trying them: they had the most laudatory certificates, which proved the purity of their military and revolutionary characters.”

² National Archives, F⁷ 6504.

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¹ BAUDOT, *Notes historiques*, 40.

² National Archives, F⁷ 4694.—“I had the misfortune, on my return from the army, of being received in my uncle’s house, where Robespierre was lodging. He deceived me, like so many others; that is my whole crime.”

³ LÉONCE GRASILIER, *Simon Duplay et son mémoire sur les Sociétés secrètes*. . . Published by the *Revue des Sociétés secrètes*, 5th March, 1913.

⁴ In January, 1924. *Chronique médicale* of 1st March, 1924.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 4774²⁴.

² JULES SIMON, *Mon Petit Journal*. *Le Temps* of the 4th April, 1890. I think that Jules Simon must have been mistaken, and that the clean, serious person he saw at the house of Philippe Le Bas was not Charlotte Robespierre, but Éléonore Duplay. Charlotte Robespierre was not admitted to the house of the La Bas family.

³ Archives in the office of Maître Dauchez, a Parisian notary.

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¹ National Archives, F⁷ 6901, dossier 7183.

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¹ *Papiers inédits trouvés chez Robespierre*, III, 305. Baraillon, a member of the Convention, revealed that, on the previous 10th Thermidor, there was to have been a fête at Crétel in honour of Robespierre.

"The poultry and lambs were already killed. . . ."

² National Archives, F⁷ 4774²⁸, Horace Molin's dossier.

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¹ *Les prisons en 1793*, by the Comtesse de Bohm, Lescure's edition, 255.

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¹ Rose Raffet, one of the Doves.

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¹ *Les prisons en 1793*, by the Comtesse de Bohm, 263.

² Haly said one day to the Comtesse de Bohm : "I have just come from Fouquier-Tinville ; I found him stretched on the carpet, pale and exhausted ; his children were caressing him and wiping the perspiration from his forehead. When I asked for his orders about to-morrow's list he said : 'Let me be, Haly, I am not up to it. What a trade ! ' Then, as though instinctively, he added : 'See my secretary ; I must have sixty, no matter which ; let him make an assortment.'"

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¹ "Catherine Théot died at the very moment of the explosion." Comtesse de Bohm, *op. cit.*, 303. This statement corresponds with the words of the inventory taken in the rooms of Catherine Théot, "deceased in the Maison du Plessis, 14th Fructidor, year II."—Archives at the office of Maître Simon, notary in Paris.

² National Archives, AD¹ 110; Fl^c 111 Seine, 13; AF¹¹ 34, 286, and AULARD, *Réaction Thermidorienne*, I, 70, 72, 77.

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¹ Comtesse de Bohm, *loc. cit.*

² AULARD, *Réaction Thermidorienne*, I, 72. "The number of dead taken to the Military School amounted to four hundred."

³ National Archives, F⁷ 3299¹⁹.

⁴ National Archives, F⁷ 4775²⁷.

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¹ Seals affixed after the decease of Citoyenne Théot, Rue de la Contrescarpe, No. 12, 7th Ventôse, year III. Archives of the Registry of the Mairie of the fifth arrondissement. Inventory taken at Catherine Théot's, 6 Pluviôse, year IV. Archives in office of M^e. Simon, notary in Paris.

² Théot heirs, evidence, 6 Vendémiaire, year IV.—Théot inheritance, power-of-attorney, 8 Pluviôse, year IV.—Théot heirs, division and receipts, 17 Prairial, year IV. Archives in office of M^e. Simon, notary in Paris.

³ *Revue rétrospective*, 2nd series. Vol. IV. *Mémoire pour dom Gerle.*

⁴ The marriage must have taken place early in 1795, since in an undated letter evidently written in 1799, Gerle, who was born in 1736, says in it that he is "63 years old," and has been "married five years." National Archives, F^{1b} II G, carton 5.

⁵ Or Chalini. In an undated petition to the Director Rewbel, he says: "I flatter myself that, passing over and even forgetting all the insults that jealousy and malevolence heaped upon my former name, you will be good enough to recognise me under that of my mother, which I have adopted. . . ." and he signs himself *Gerle-Chalini*.—*Auvergne Historique, Varia*. But his mother's name was Marie Goy.—*Same source*. It is not therefore clear whence the ex-monk took his pseudonym.

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¹ National Archives, F^{1b} I, 5.

² When she died in 1821, a considerable quantity of cinders were found in her cellar, and phials filled with a liquid that no one thought of analysing.—*Une mystique révolutionnaire, Suzanne Labrousse*, by the Abbé CHRISTIAN MOREAU, 236.

³ Archives of the Seine. Registers.

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¹ And also a credit of 500 francs. Archives of the Seine, DQ², 1804, folios 16 (back) and 25.

² Archives of the Seine. Registers.

³ With Pache, Bouchotte and others.

⁴ Tourneux, *Bibliographie* IV, Nos. 23051 to 23054.

⁵ On the 27th Pluviôse, year IV, 16th Feb., 1796. Archives of the État-civil of Versailles.

⁶ Modeste Desbois, Héron's widow, died in 1843.

⁷ Archives, W 500 and F⁷ 4775.

⁸ Affixing of the seals at Sénar's house. Communicated by M. Paul Albert.

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¹ Recorded by Carré de Busseroles, *Curieuse histoire d'un procureur de la Commune de Tours*.

² Signed by Ribault and Bourbeau, notaries of Poitiers.

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¹ PHILARÈTE CHASLES, *Mémoires*, I, *passim*, particularly 47-51.

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¹ "I leave it to the gratitude and equity of my children to carry out this, my last wish; and I pray heaven it may not be in vain."

—A. TOURNIER, *Vadier, président du Comité de Sécurité générale*, 308

316.

² Archives of the church of Sainte-Gudule-de-Bruxelles.

